THE LABOUR MONTHLY

A MAGAZINE OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR

Editor: R. PALME DUTT

Volume 13 March, 1931 Number 3

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

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J. STALIN

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NOTES OF THE MONTH

The International Situation—Class Struggle in Britain—Lessons—World Issues—World Capitalist Offensive—Effects of World Crisis—Old Equilibrium Breaking—Germany—Hour of Crisis—Young Plan and Debts—Cancellation and Versailles Revision—France and Germany—French Aims—Pan-Europe—Against Whom?—Capitalism and Socialism—Five Year Plan—Capitalism on the Warpath—The Anti-Soviet Crusade—Be Prepared

AS the present world crisis deepens, the revolutionary character of the issues that it raises comes increasingly to the front. The conflicts of capitalism and the working class grow in every country. In a series of countries —and, above all, in the key country of the next stage, Germany —the approach to a revolutionary situation draws visibly close. The storms of international politics increase, and are already throwing into instability the lines laid down by the victor treaties of the past war, and raising the outlines of new blocs and combinations. Above all, the present crisis is marked by one character which is without parallel in any previous crisis of capitalism. That character is the simultaneous growth and expansion of socialism in one section of the world in the midst of the heaviest crisis of capitalism. This growth of socialism in the midst of the decline of capitalism has now become the dominant fact of the international situation. The consequent gathering conflict of capitalism in decline to gather its forces to smash the growth of socialism at its centre, the Soviet Republic, now begins to draw in its wake all the complex forces of the international situation, no less than of the inner social situation in every country. The increasing death-consciousness of capitalism drives to increasing desperateness of action. The line of development may not be a straight one; the first stages of explosion may break out at many points. *But all the signs on every side force increasingly to the front the possibility that the present crisis, a crisis without*

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parallel in the history of capitalism, may lead directly to a new stage of the world revolution, a stage critical for the whole future of the working class and of socialism. Such a new stage may come by the immediate explosion of the capitalist crisis at any one of many points into war and its consequences; it may come by the direct outburst of the social contradictions in one or another leading country into a revolutionary crisis and the struggle of the working class for power; or it may come, most likely of all, by the final desperate plunge of declining capitalism in crisis to war to smash the rising Socialist Republic and the growth of socialism. It is necessary to be prepared at every point.

THE British working class has already awakened to the gathering attack of capitalism all along the line, as a direct consequence of the world crisis. Snowden's ultimatum last month on behalf of the Treasury and his capitalist masters; his demand for "drastic and disagreeable measures" and "temporary sacrifice" from the workers; the National Confederation of Employers' Organisations' open and ruthless programme for cuts all round down to the lowest foreign levels; the wholesale demands of the employers in every leading industry; all have forced forward the awakening. They have smashed the lying dreams inculcated by the labour leaders of easy, peaceful progress, of the path of the ballot and a Labour Government, of rationalisation and Mondism, of "sane" trade union and Labour politics and agreement with capitalism; they have shown the bare necessity of struggle. *If* the burdens of capitalism are to be maintained —and this is the be-all and end-all of the "sound finance" of the Labour Government and all the capitalist experts; *if* the colossal burdens of the War Debt and all the other parasitic capitalist strangleholds on industry are to be maintained (the average rate of interest on debenture capital was actually higher at 5.39 per cent. in 1930, in the midst of crisis and falling prices, than in 1929 at 5.15 per cent. and in 1928 at 5.02 per cent.; the average dividend on preference capital was actually higher in 1930 at 5.7 per cent. than in

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1929 at 5.4 per cent. and in 1928 at 5.3 per cent.; the returns to the rentiers were not only being maintained, but actually forced up in money value, in the midst of crisis and headlong falling prices—" Economist Commercial History of 1930 "); then, to maintain this, the wages of all workers must come down; capitalism knows no other way. It is a bare fight between capitalism and the working class.

THE gathering working-class resistance has been powerfully shown in the cotton fight; the initial success of the weavers to beat back the first round of the employers' attack, although not yet able under the shackles of the corrupt trade union leadership to win positive results for the sacrifices and struggle, and leaving the employers free to resume the attack at their own time on a wider front, has nevertheless constituted a first moral victory, showing the power of the workers by action and struggle to enforce their will, when all the " wise " leaders of the Labour Government and the trade unions counselled surrender and the impossibility of resistance. In the immediate future the battle extends to the miners, the railwaymen and the engineers; the wider cotton issue is still pending. The struggle is rising; for the first time since the ruinous breaking of the ranks in 1926, and its black sequel of degradation, the working class front is forming anew on a wide range, and again on the advance.

BUT it is necessary to see clearly the character of the struggle in front, to widen our horizon. It is no good looking merely for a *repetition* of previous rising waves of wage-struggles. The conditions are changed. In the intensity of capitalist crisis and decline the present fight for wages takes on more than ever a revolutionary character, is more than ever a direct fight against capitalist profits and " fixed charges," which will meet with the fierce resistance of the entire forces, economic and political, of capitalism. It is united with political and semi-political issues, the attack on unemployed benefit and the social services, the allocation of

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the state budget, and the question of tariffs. The fight must break the fetters of present Labour and trade union politics, which act only as the instrument of capitalism against the workers, and find new forms and leadership. The fight has to break from the old sectional forms, and from merely defensive forms, and advance to a new united character and increasingly conscious common political aims. And finally, the fight is governed, not merely by the conditions of a special British crisis, but of a world crisis, whose consequences may at any moment transform the character of the fight and advance it abruptly to a direct political struggle for which we need to be prepared. *We cannot afford to repeat the experience of* 1914, *when a rising wave of militant industrial struggles was taken completely unawares by the outbreak of the imperialist war, and in consequence collapsed like a pricked bubble, at the very moment when the greatest issues faced the working class.* Therefore we must combine our present struggles with the sharpest alertness to the gathering international situation and the responsibilities it is likely to throw upon us.

WHAT are the effects of the world crisis on the international situation? The first and most elementary effect is obvious in every country in the capitalist world. In every country capitalism finds itself driven to the most intense attacks upon the working class as its sole line of solution, finds itself faced with dilemmas of the state budget and the necessity of cuts; campaigns for economy are pushed forward at the same time as capital seeks in vain for avenues for investment (the bold radical "reformers" among the economists preaching abstractly in the air to "spend" as the solution, without enquiring whether nine-tenths of the population have the means to spend); social contradictions are intensified on every side, and the social-political situation moves to greater instability and even crisis. The world offensive of capital meets with growing resistance from the workers; social conflicts increase. In America and Britain, in Australia and Germany all-round wage-cuts are the order of the day; budget deficits require to be met; the

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unemployed fight for their claims; social struggles grow in volume. The degree of crisis varies with the general situation, and stage of class development, in the country concerned. In Germany, where all the knots of world capitalist contradictions are most completely centred, there is rapid advance towards a direct revolutionary situation. This growing inner strain of capitalism in every country, and intensifying class struggle, is already a driving factor of the whole international situation.

THE second effect of the world crisis is to sharpen all the contradictions of capitalism between the capitalist states, no less than between the imperialist states and the colonial peoples. The greater economic strain renders every international question, of trade, of tariffs, of markets, of debts, of reparations, the more acute. The bigger the effort of each country to recover its position, to cheapen costs and intensify competitive power, the more the general crisis is intensified. The heightened British-American antagonism shows itself above all in South America, and the successive revolutionary struggles there. The fiasco of the Imperial Conference shows equally the growth of competition and division in this sphere, which the British bourgeoisie is still vainly seeking to devise a workable policy to bridge. Similarly the growth of tariffs and tariff conflicts was witnessed at the League of Nations Council in the beginning of the year, where the reporter, the Dutch Prime Minister, stated that, four years after the World Economic Conference had unanimously called for a halt in tariff rivalry, the present position was worse than in 1927, and that " a general tariff war " was now threatening, with menacing consequences to international peace. But it is above all in the general political situation, especially in the questions affecting Europe, the centre of the capitalist decline, that the new stage shows itself.

PROPORTIONATELY as the crisis spreads, the old basis of equilibrium, so far as it had been reached, is weakened by the strain of new forces against it and the growth of conflicts, and begins to break up. The old basis

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of equilibrium in Europe, on which the partial reconstruction of capitalism had been built up, rested on the very rotten foundations of, first, the Versailles Treaty and French domination in Europe; second, the Dawes-Young "settlements" of reparations tribute from Germany; and third, closely connected with the second, the inter-allied debts settlements, by which the greater part of the tribute finally passed to the American victor. The maintenance of this basis was only rendered possible by the parallel maintenance of an enormous flow of American loans to Europe and especially Germany, more than outweighing the tribute and ending in a passive balance. This was the basis of the so-called "stabilisation"; and, as was pointed out in this journal at the time (see the "Notes" for March, 1925, on "The Gold Standard"), at a time when the victory of "stabilisation was still being newly celebrated by all the capitalist economists, statesmen, bankers and reformist socialists, it was inevitable that, so soon as the flow of loans should dry up, and give place instead to the reverse necessity of a heavy burden of interest additional to the tribute, to be paid only by an enormous expansion of exports in an overcrowded market, the pillars of this so-called "stabilisation" would collapse, and give place to a new and greater crisis. To-day we are living through this process; and the subsequent crisis has been all the greater, because the temporary period of "restoration" was used for the processes of rationalisation and intensifying production which have now gone to produce the large-scale jamming and chaos of all the workings of capitalism, and direct downward movement.

TAKE the position of Germany. By the middle of 1930 the total foreign indebtedness, accumulated in the six years since 1924, amounted, according to government figures, to £1,350 millions, or, allowing for German holdings of capital abroad, to a net £850 millions. Allow for the interest on this at about £45–50 millions, additional to the Young payments of £100 millions, and we reach a total of £150 millions a year, which can only be covered either by new foreign loans, or by forcing up exports to yield

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a corresponding surplus. But the stream of American capital to Germany, which was so marked during 1924-8, has almost dried up in the last two years. The total long-term foreign loans received by Germany in 1929 was between one-fifth and one-quarter that of 1928; the position in 1930 was only maintained by the specially arranged Young Loan. The greater the total of foreign loans and other tribute claims to which Germany and its industries are mortgaged, the greater the difficulty of raising each additional loan. Can the position, then, be covered by an expanding export surplus? The 1930 trade figures showed for the first time an export surplus of £82 millions; but this surplus was based, not on an expansion of exports—they diminished both in value and in volume—but on a heavy decrease in imports by £154 millions, representing, not only the forcing down of internal consumption, but also the fall in imports of raw materials, and therefore of future exports. The whole German industrial apparatus has been rebuilt to force up mass production and exports. On the other hand, German capitalism finds itself without the regular imperialist advantages of colonies, large capital interests abroad and a flow of export of capital, to help to hold and conquer and create markets. The high-power industrial apparatus finds itself without markets and is one-third idle. The only way forward seen is to drive through still more attacks on the workers and on all internal consumption in order to cheapen goods. But meanwhile the foreign payments are not covered unless loans can be raised; and, to add to the difficulties, capital is flying from Germany, in fear at the gathering social issues.

AGAINST this background, the developments of the past six months in Germany, and their consequent effects on the international situation, inevitably follow. The Brüning-Hindenburg dictatorship overriding parliamentary forms; the forcing through of the programme of financial "reforms" to drive down the standards of the population; the mass unemployment and growing misery; the rising unrest of all the exploited strata; the growth of

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communist influence; the tactics of the national bourgeoisie to divert the rising revolutionary wave to fascist forms, utilising for their cry the discontent against the Young Plan—all these characterise the inner situation. What of the effects of this on the international situation? What is the role of the German Government? On the one hand, German capitalism is driven to a more aggressive role. The German Government presses in a variety of semi-official forms the impossibility of continuing the Young payments (the Gröner New Year message), the necessity of some arrangement on the question of colonies, the whole question of revision of Versailles; and takes up a more active, independent line in successive international conferences, presses on the question of disarmament, votes for the propositions of the Soviet Union, threatens possible withdrawal from the League of Nations. On the other hand, the German Government is in fact weak, both financially, and in relation to the inner situation; desperately seeks loans and credits in the international market; and shows strong inclinations to seek an accommodation with France, while at the same time fearing, in the Foreign Minister Curtius' phrase, any "one-sided" orientation. *From this situation follows the mixture of approaches to independence, and of actual weakness, in German foreign policy.* The importance of this is directly obvious when we come to consider the key position of Germany in relation to the capitalist plans against the Soviet Union.

IN the immediate foreground stands the question of the Young Plan and its possible suspension. *But with the Young Plan is inextricably tied up the question of the inter-allied debts.* If Germany were to suspend payment on the Young Plan, it is probable that Britain and France would suspend payment on the debts to America. And, indeed, the recent plan of the French nationalist, D'Ormesson, for a French-German entente, was put forward on this basis, for a 50 per cent. suspension of the Young payments and a 50 per cent. suspension of French payments to America. British semi-official expression, and the British bankers—so the

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Chairman of Barclay's in his annual address—have been most tireless in pressing on America the desirability of cancelling the £2,400 millions of war debts owing to America. A few of the most prominent American bankers, including the Chairman of the Chase National Bank, the largest bank in America and, indeed, in the world, have also hinted at the desirability of, at any rate, reduction as "good business" for America. But here the obstacles are heavy. The American Treasury at the moment of being faced with a deficit is little disposed to consider favourably plans for adding to it for the sake of a vague, ultimate general advantage. The opposition of the bulk of American capitalism is likely to be no less stubborn against the prospect of giving additional strength to capitalism in Europe to equip and arm itself against America.

THERE is no doubt that for world capitalism as a whole a general cancellation of debts and reparations would represent the "wisest" course, and serve temporarily to ease the crisis and give an additional lease of life. But there is not, and cannot be, any such thing as an organised world capitalism as a whole; and within the set of conflicting forces of which capitalism is composed, any such simple line of alleviation, as the experience of the past twelve years has shown, is extremely difficult, and meets with heavy obstacles. Thus the situation as it has so far developed from the world crisis, has shown on all sides a forcing to the front of all the contradictions of the present stage of capitalism. It has shown a gathering front of the capitalist states dissatisfied with the existing division of the world spoils against those in possession, and in particular, of Germany and Italy, with America to some extent assisting in the background, against the system of Versailles and of French hegemony in Europe. This has been the more marked owing to the weakness of the usual balancing and variable factor of British policy; the extreme weakness of British foreign policy since the world crisis, reflecting the extreme weakening of the whole British position, and pre-occupation with internal questions, with India, with the empire, and the unstable political equilibrium

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represented by the Labour Government, has made during this period British foreign policy under the Labour Government a secondary and almost negligible quantity in the immediate alignments of forces. (Contrast Snowden's table-thumping role at the outset of the Labour Government eighteen months ago, before the world crisis had set in, with the passive helplessness and occasional ineffective opposition of Henderson to-day in the wake of French policy on every issue, on disarmament, on the question of trained reserves, over the Pan-Europe schemes, &c.)

THE indications of two blocs were already conspicuous in the proceedings of the Disarmament Committee last November, the evidence of which was analysed in these Notes last January. The League of Nations Council in January showed in part a similar picture. Italy and Germany used the question of the invitation of the Soviet Union to the Pan-Europe consultations as a means of making difficulties for France; the question of Polish infringement of national rights was pushed to a virtual censure on Poland; the French candidate, Benes, for Chairmanship of the Disarmament Conference, was defeated. Nevertheless, these surface divisions no longer played as important a part as in November; in practice, French policy held the lead. Instead, there were signs of approaches towards a French-German entente, which are of serious importance for the whole future of the international situation and the line of direction of the war danger.

WHAT has been the reaction of French Imperialism towards the new lines of development and the gathering forces of an opposing camp against the Versailles system? On the one hand, French policy has declared its implacable hostility to any "revisionist offensive," as its press terms the gathering anti-Versailles forces. The declaration of Tardieu to the Chamber of Deputies last November still holds the position:

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> If a programme of revision were to be placed on the agenda of an international conference with any prospect of success, within two months we should have world war, or, as M. Briand has expressed it, revolution.

But on the other hand, French policy is equally aware, despite all the official pretences of invincible blindness to anything but a juridical form fixed for eternity, that the bases of Versailles cannot last for ever, that the balance of forces is changing, that it is necessary to adapt to these changes, if the French position is to be maintained. The reflection of this is the policy of Pan-Europe, attempting in new forms to fix the existing statutory position in Europe, and the endeavours to draw Germany into a French-German understanding. But this whole policy of Pan-Europe, which is at present the dominant ideal expression of the present aims of French Imperialism, has a far wider range; and it is this wider range that is now critical for the whole situation.

THE policy of Pan-Europe has had from the outset three main aspects. First, as an instrument of French policy to maintain fixed the existing relations and its existing dominance in Europe; the aspect that has led it to be dubbed "Pan-Versailles" rather than Pan-Europe. Second, as an anti-American aspect; this figured strongly in the early unofficial propaganda, but has passed more into the background since. Third, an anti-Soviet aspect; this has been prominent from the first; it is now becoming more and more openly the decisive character. In its first character, as an exclusively French policy, it meets with considerable opposition, because it comes directly up against the growing new divisions. As the Italian Foreign Minister, Grandi, declared at the preliminary discussion in January, there can be no question of European union save on a basis of equality of the members, thus directly implying that the revision of Versailles is the prior condition for any scheme of Pan-Europe. Germany took, less strongly, a similar line. Britain has throughout taken a more or less blocking line of unenthusiastic acquiescence and raising of difficulties.

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SO far, there is no basis for advance of the policy; there is no reality of common ground. *A capitalist camp is forced into a union only on a basis of a common hostility;* the United States of America was forced into federation on the basis of hostility to Britain; German unification was carried through on the basis of the war with France. Which is in this case the decisive hostility that drives forward the policy? The anti-American character still lurks in the background, and may still show itself on questions of debts or of tariffs; but it does not at present occupy the stage. What comes increasingly to the front from the very first meeting of the European Committee is the question of the Soviet Union; the whole discussions centre in this direction; the French sponsors of the scheme openly endeavour to exclude from their supposed "pan-European" discussions 45 per cent. of Europe, and to ignore the contrary decision when reached; in the subsequent Paris meeting in February on agrarian questions, the decisive anti-Soviet line becomes still more open. *What is visibly happening is that the growing character of this issue is more and more overshadowing all other issues, driving them into the background, outweighing and changing previous orientations and combinations, and drawing the capitalist states into a common camp, in spite of all the powerful inner contradictions.*

WE come here to the most important effect of the world crisis on the international situation. *The principal effect of the world crisis on the international situation has been the forcing forward of the contrast between capitalist decline and socialist advance, and therefore the hastening of the advance of the capitalist world to conflict against the socialist world as its sole solution.* Up to the time of the world crisis it was still possible for a large part of the capitalist world to ignore or belittle the economic significance of what was happening in the Soviet Union. It was essentially the political and military leaders of capitalism, the Churchills and Chamberlains, the Poincares and Fochs, who, in conjunction with specific interests such as the oil interests, drove forward the

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crusade against the Soviet Union as vital for the survival of capitalism. But a great part of the business world was content to endeavour to make profits out of what they considered the economic weakness of Russia; and a leading political school associated with them, of the Lloyd George and liberal-labour type, looked to the success of rapid capitalist penetration as a more effective dissolvent of the revolution than any military intervention. Between these two schools, no less than between the contradictions of the different capitalist interests and state-groupings, the successive projects of intervention failed. The original destruction by the wars and imperialist interventions had been so great that it was long deemed by all the capitalist experts that no recovery was possible for decades. "Russia is entirely ruined," wrote D'Abernon in his diary on May 17, 1922, "and no trade of considerable moment can be carried on for a good many years to come"—this less than nine years ago from one of the shrewdest representatives of capitalist finance and diplomacy of the time, written, not as a propagandist statement, but as his private judgment.

TO-DAY the whole position is changed. For the first time in history the economic superiority of socialism to capitalism is demonstrated, no longer in theory only, but in practice. Socialism, inheriting a territory ravaged by war and civil war, without technical equipment, training or accumulated resources, and met with boycott from the world outside, has in a few years transformed an almost complete annihilation of production into a new organisation of production industrial and agrarian, already far outstripping the pre-war level, and which by the completion of the Five Year Plan will reach three to four times the pre-war level. Capitalism, inheriting every accumulated resource, with unlimited machine equipment, trained workers and century-old experience, has landed in a colossal chaos and direct decline of production. According to the Berlin "Institut für Konjunkturforschung," one of the principal international statistical authorities, the index of industrial production, on the basis of 1928 as 100, stood as follows in September, 1930:—United States, 81.1;

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Germany, 80.8; France, 107.9; Britain (August), 87.6; Canada, 89.4; Soviet Union, 157.6. And this is only at the completion of the second year of the Five Year Plan. What will be the position at the end of the Five Year Plan, if it is allowed to be peacefully carried through? It is not surprising that capitalism cannot face this prospect, is turning increasingly to every most desperate expedient to stop it.

THE whole tone of the capitalist world now changes. A *Times* editorial quotes a "leading authority" in the business world as saying:

> If the rest of the world does not want Communism, it should refuse, by agreement, to trade with Russia in any way, because in a few years' time, when all the factories now being built are fully working, with the country's vast internal resources and the energy of 150,000,000 people to draw upon, they will not only provide all that the Russian people want, but will swamp the world with cheap goods with which other industrial nations cannot compete. (*Times*, January 29, 1931.)

This is typical of hundreds of similar declarations every day in every organ of every capitalist country in the world. The old propaganda of the "failure" of socialism in Russia is long obsolete. The new propaganda bases itself on the admitted fact of the success of socialism. No longer socialist inefficiency, but socialist efficiency is now the burden of capitalist complaint. *The first premises of every capitalist argument to-day is the invincible superiority of socialist production. From this they infer the necessity of smashing it.* International action to defeat the "menace" is now the cry on every side. It is proposed first in the terms of international boycott, with the hint of military action not far behind. Propaganda has to adapt itself accordingly. The facts of production, of capitalist decline and socialist advance, can no longer be denied; they are too plain. Propaganda has to concentrate on the "how," on the question how these facts are possible, and to invent the myths of "slave-labour" (the capitalists speaking of slave-labour! and this of the only labour in the world that is not slave-labour!), because they cannot face the very simple "how" of socialist production. The workers must go to war

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to fight for the system of unemployment, lower wages, worsened conditions and capitalist dictatorship, against the system of socialist production, workers' rule and rising workers' standards !

THIS issue more and more dominates all other issues of the international situation, as the crisis develops. All the other contradictions and antagonisms show signs of being pushed to second place, and even of being temporarily harmonised or diminished, in relation to this issue. British and French policy draw again closer together (co-operation of the Treasury experts on the gold question). British policy endeavours to reconcile the French-Italian antagonisms. French policy endeavours to win Germany with promises of credits, with concessions on the Polish question. And meanwhile on every side the menace of Soviet " dumping," the necessity of a " common front " and an " agreed international policy " in relation to the Soviet Union is discussed. The Eastern European agrarian states, *i.e.* the Border states, are drawn together through a series of conferences into " agrarian blocs " under French leadership. Weygand, whose name is a policy, is appointed Commander-in-Chief of the French Armies. And Paul-Boncour, the " socialist " spokesman of the French Foreign Office, declares : " 1931 will be in foreign politics a year of unrest ; France, and with France democracy and peace, are threatened by countries in which dictatorship rules." *" Pan-Europe " becomes more and more openly and unconcealedly the " ideal " expression of the anti-Soviet crusade.*

WHAT is the perspective ? The issues of the international situation are still complex ; the points of possible explosion are many ; it is necessary to be prepared on all sides. The immediate crux of the situation turns above all on two factors. The first is the key question of Germany. The social struggles that are gathering in Germany are of decisive world significance. If French policy succeeds in winning hold of the German Government, by combined pressure and concessions and fear through its own

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weakness, and drawing it from its former neutral friendly relations with the Soviet Union in return for whatever price may be arranged; and if the German Government is enabled with outside aid to crush the gathering struggle of the German workers; then the path is opened for the supreme world capitalist attack on the citadel of the working class, the Soviet Union; the supreme struggle is opened throughout the world. But if the German workers advance, as they are advancing; if they are able by their strength and their pressure to compel the German bourgeoisie to think twice before taking the desperate risk of any such adventure; if they are able to draw all the exploited strata of the population from the fascist demagogy to the path of the people's revolution; then a new era will open out for the whole working class in Europe and the world, a new and different path from the present capitalist crisis. Closely connected with this is the second factor—the gathering wave of working class struggles throughout the world against the capitalist attacks and their outcome. *The victory of the working class in these struggles to-day is already a blow against the future war, is already a step towards our way, the socialist way, out of the crisis.* As we enter into these present fights, it is necessary that we should do it with consciousness of these gathering issues, with preparedness for the big developments that the present world situation may bring in the near future.

R. P. D.

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WE MUST BECOME MASTERS OF TECHNIQUE

By J. STALIN

[*The following is the text of the recent important speech of Comrade Stalin delivered on February* 5, 1931, *at the Conference in Moscow of the chief workers and employees of Socialist industry in the Soviet Union.*]

THE work of your conference is coming to an end. You are about to adopt resolutions. I do not doubt that they will be adopted unanimously. In these resolutions—I know something of their contents—you will approve the industrial and control figures for the year 1931 and pledge yourselves to fulfil them.

The word of the Bolsheviks is a serious word. The Bolsheviks are in the habit of fulfilling the pledges they give. What however does it mean to fulfil the pledges of the control figures for the year 1931? It means to secure the general growth of industrial production by 45 per cent. That however is a very big task. Nay more. Such a pledge means not only that you promise to fulfil our Five-Year Plan in four years—that is already a settled affair and does not need any further resolutions—it means that you promise to fulfil it in three years in the most important and decisive branches of industry.

What is necessary in order to fulfil the control figures, in order to achieve a 45 per cent. increase of production, in order to fulfil the Five-Year Plan, not in four but in the most important and decisive branches of production, in three years?

For this two main conditions are necessary. Firstly, that real, or as we say "objective" possibilities exist for this. Secondly, that there exist the desire and ability so to run our factories that these possibilities become transformed into living realities.

Did we in the past years possess the objective possibilities in order completely to fulfil the plan? Yes. Indisputable facts bear witness to this. These facts are that in March and April of last year industry increased its output by 31 per cent. in comparison with the previous year. The question therefore arises why did we not fulfil the plan for the whole year? What has prevented this? What was lacking? There was lacking the ability to make use of the existing possibilities. There was lacking the ability to run the workshops, factories and mines properly.

There existed the first condition: the objective possibilities for the fulfilment of the Plan. But we did not have in a sufficient measure the

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second condition: the ability to manage production. And precisely because there was lacking the ability to manage the factories, the Plan was not fulfilled. Instead of an increase of 31 to 32 per cent. there was an increase of only 25 per cent. Of course an increase of 25 per cent. is a big achievement. There is not a single capitalist country which in the year 1930 showed or even now shows an increase of production. In all the capitalist countries without exception there is taking place a big falling off of production. Under these conditions an increase of 25 per cent. is a tremendous advance. But we could have done even better. We possessed all the necessary "objective" prerequisites for this.

What guarantees exist now, that we shall not this year have a repetition of what happened last year, that the Plan will be completely fulfilled, that the existing possibilities will be utilised by us in the manner necessary, that the promise will not to some extent remain on paper?

In the history of States, in the history of countries, in the history of armies, cases have occurred where there existed all the possibilities for success, for victory, but these possibilities were not used, as the leaders did not notice these possibilities, did not know how to take advantage of them, so that the armies suffered a defeat.

Do we possess all the necessary possibilities for the fulfilment of the control figures for the year 1931? Yes, we possess such possibilities.

What constitutes these possibilities, and what is necessary in order to realise these possibilities?

In the first place sufficient natural wealth is necessary: iron ore, coal, mineral oil, corn, cotton. Do we possess these? Yes, in greater quantities than in any other country. Let us take, for instance, the Ural district, which represents such a combination of natural resources as is not to be found in any other country. Ore, coal, copper, oil, grain —the Ural district possesses all of these. We have everything (it is true we are lacking rubber, but in one or two years we shall have rubber at our disposal). So far as natural resources are concerned we lack nothing. We have even more than necessary.

What, however, is still necessary?

There is needed the existence of a power which has the desire and the force to utilise these vast natural resources for the benefit of the people. Do we possess such a power? Yes! It is true, our work for the utilisation of the natural resources does not always proceed without a certain amount of friction between our own collaborators. For example, in the past year the Soviet Power had to conduct a certain struggle over the question of forming a second metallurgical and coal base, without which we cannot develop further. We have already overcome this obstacle and we shall possess this base in a short time. What is still required?

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It is required that this power enjoys the support of the masses of the workers and peasants numbering millions. Does our power enjoy this support? Yes. You will not find in the whole world any other power that enjoys such support of the workers and peasants as the Soviet Power enjoys. There is no need for me to refer to the fact of the growth of socialist competition, to the fact of the growth of the shock brigade movement, to the campaign for the counter-plan of the masses in production and finance. All these facts which clearly prove the support of the Soviet Power by the million masses, are known to everybody.

What is necessary in order to fulfil and to exceed the control figures for 1931?

There is necessary the existence of a regime which is free from the incurable maladies of capitalism and which has serious advantages over capitalism. Crisis, unemployment, mismanagement, impoverishment of the broad masses—these are the incurable maladies of capitalism. Our regime does not suffer from these maladies because power is in our hands, in the hands of the working class, because we are carrying on planned economy, accumulating resources according to plan and distributing them correctly among the various branches of national economy. We are free from the incurable maladies of capitalism. That is where we differ from capitalism, herein lies our decisive advantage over capitalism. Let us consider how the capitalists seek to emerge from the crisis. They are resorting to a drastic reduction of wages, they are forcing down the prices of raw material and food to the utmost. But they will not hear of any serious reduction in the prices of industrial products. That means that they wish to escape from the crisis at the cost of the main body of consumers of goods, at the cost of the workers, at the cost of the peasants, at the cost of the toilers of those countries that produce raw materials and food. The capitalists themselves are sawing away the branch on which they are sitting and instead of finding a way out of the crisis the crisis is becoming deeper, there is resulting an accumulation of new preconditions for new and even more serious crises. Our advantage lies in the fact that we are free from crises of over-production, that we have not and shall not have millions of unemployed, that we have no anarchy of production because we are carrying on planned economy. But that is not everything. We are the country of the most concentrated industry. That means that we are building up our industry on the foundations of the best technique and as a result are able to secure an unexampled productivity of labour, an unprecedented tempo of accumulation. Our weaknesses in the past consisted in the fact that this industry was based on the scattered peasant agriculture. But that is already a thing of the past. To-day things are already different. To-morrow, perhaps in a year, we shall become the country of the

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largest agricultural undertakings in the world. The Soviet estates and the collective farms, which represent the forms of big undertakings, are already this year supplying one-half of our total market grain. That means however that our regime, the Soviet regime, offers us possibilities of rapid progress such as no bourgeois country can dream of.

What is still necessary in order to advance with seven-league boots?

There is necessary the existence of a Party that is sufficiently consolidated and united in order to concentrate the efforts of all the best people of the working class on one point and which has sufficient experience in order not to give way in the face of difficulties and to be able systematically to carry out in practice the correct revolutionary Bolshevist policy. Have we such a Party? Yes. Is its policy correct? Yes, it is correct, for it is yielding serious successes. This is recognised to-day not only by the friends but also by the enemies of the working class. Let us consider all the well-known "honorable" gentlemen—Fish in America, Churchill in England, Poincaré in France—how they are howling and foaming with rage against our Party! What is the reason of this howling, of this outbreak of fury? It is because the policy of our Party is correct, because it is bringing success after success.

Here, comrades, we have all the possibilities enabling us to fulfil the control figures for 1931, to fulfil the Five-Year Plan in four, and in the most important spheres even in three years.

Thus we have the first prerequisite for the fulfilment of the plan—the "objective" possibilities.

Do we possess the second prerequisite, the ability, in order to take advantage of those possibilities? In other words, do we possess the correct management in the factories, workshops and mines? Is everything here in order?

Unfortunately everything here is not in order, and as Bolsheviks we must say it quite plainly and openly.

What does management of production mean? With us the question of management of the factories is not always regarded from a Bolshevist standpoint. With us it is often thought that management means simply signing papers. That is regrettable, but it is a fact. Sometimes we are reminded involuntarily of the Pompadour of Schtchedrin. You remember how Madame Pompadour proceeded to teach the young Pompadour: "Do not worry your head over science, do not study, other people can engage in this, it is not your affair. Your business is to manage, to sign papers." It must be admitted to our shame that among us, among the Bolsheviks there are not a few such people who manage by signing papers. But to study things, to acquire technical knowledge and to have a thorough mastery of the matter, it is out of the question.

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How could it happen that we Bolsheviks who have gone through three revolutions, who emerged victoriously from the heavy civil war, who have solved tremendous tasks of building up industry, and diverted the peasantry on to the path of Socialism—how could it happen that we failed in the matter of managing production ?

The reason is that it is easier to sign papers than to manage production and numerous economists have adopted the line of least resistance. We, too, are to blame. The centre is to blame. Ten years ago the slogan was issued : As the Communists do not yet sufficiently understand the technics of production, as they must first learn to run industry, the technicians and engineers, the specialists shall run industry ; you Communists must not interfere in technical affairs, but study without interfering in technics, study indefatigably the science of running industry, in order, then, together with the specialists, who really understand their business, to become real leaders of production." That was the slogan. What was the actual result ? The second part of this formula was thrown overboard, for learning is difficult. The first part of the formula, however, was simplified, and non-interference was interpreted as meaning abandonment of the study of the technics of production. There resulted an absurdity—an injurious and dangerous absurdity—and the more quickly we get rid of it the better.

Life itself repeatedly informed us that things were not in order in this sphere. The Shakhty trial was the first signal. The Shakhty trial showed that the Party organisations and the trade unions were lacking in revolutionary vigilance. It showed that in regard to technique our economists are terribly backward ; that engineers and technicians who work without supervision are more prone to go over to sabotage, the more so as the enemy abroad uninterruptedly pester them with " suggesgestions." The second signal was the trial of the " Industrial Party." Of course the class struggle is the underlying cause of sabotage. Of course the class enemy offers the most furious resistance to the socialist offensive. But this alone does not suffice to explain such a prolific growth of sabotage activity.

How could it come about that sabotage assumed such wide dimensions ? Who is to blame for this ? We are to blame. If we had viewed differently the task of running industry, if we had gone over much earlier to the study of technique, to mastering technique, if we had interfered more frequently with an expert knowledge in the management of industry, the sabotagers would not have succeeded in causing so much damage.

We ourselves must become specialists, the masters of the business ; we must turn our faces to technique, to technical knowledge ; life is driving us in this direction. But neither the first signal not even the second signal has up to now secured the necessary turn. It is time, high time to turn our faces to technique. It is time to discard the old

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slogan, the obsolete slogan of non-interference in technique. We must ourselves become specialists, absolute masters of the business.

We are frequently asked why we have not the management of industry in our own hands personally. This will only be possible when we master technique. So long as we have not among us, among the Bolsheviks sufficient people who are thoroughly familiar with questions of technique, economics and finance, we shall not have the management of industry in our own hands. You may adopt as many resolutions as you like, pledge yourselves in ever such beautiful words, but if you do not master the technique, the economy, the finance of the factory, the workshop and mine, nothing will come of it.

It is therefore necessary that we ourselves learn the technique, that we ourselves master the business, therein only lies the guarantee that our plans will be completely fulfilled and that the running of industry will be actually in our hands.

This task is of course not easy, nevertheless it must be accomplished. Science, technical experience, knowledge, all that can be acquired, if not to-day, then to-morrow. The chief thing here is to possess the passionate Bolshevik desire to acquire technical knowledge, to acquire a knowledge of the science of production. Provided there exists a passionate desire everything can be achieved and everything mastered.

It is often asked whether the tempo cannot be slowed down, the movement damped down a bit. No, comrades, that is impossible. The pace must not be retarded. On the contrary, it must be increased according to our strength and possibilities. This is demanded by our obligations to the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union. This is demanded by our obligations to the working class of the whole world.

To slow down the pace means to remain behind. Those who remain behind are beaten. We do not, however, wish to be beaten. No, we do not. The history of the old Russia consisted in the fact that it was continually beaten owing to its backwardness. It was beaten by the Mongolian Khans, it was beaten by the Turkish Beys, it was beaten by the Swedish feudal lords, it was beaten by the Polish-Lithuanian pans, it was beaten by the English and French capitalists, it was beaten by the Japanese barons. It was beaten owing to its backwardness, on account of its military backwardness, of its cultural backwardness, its political backwardness, its industrial backwardness, its agricultural backwardness. It was beaten because one could do so with impunity and obtain advantage from it. You remember the words of the pre-revolutionary poet: "You are crippled, you are at the same time running over with wealth, you are powerful, you are at the same time impotent, oh mother Russia."

These gentlemen have learned by heart these words of the old poet. They therefore proceeded to attack Russia and declared: "You are

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running over with wealth," therefore you can be plundered. They attacked Russia and declared: "You are crippled and impotent," therefore we can rob and plunder you with impunity. That is the law of capitalism—to beat the weak and backward. The wolf law of capitalism. You are backward, you are weak, therefore you are in the wrong, therefore you can be beaten and subjugated. You are powerful, therefore you are in the right, therefore one must beware of you.

Therefore we must no longer remain backward.

In the past we had not and could not have any fatherland. Now, however, as with us the workers are in power, we have a fatherland and shall defend its independence. Do you want our socialist fatherland to be beaten and to lose its independence? If you do not want this you must liquidate this backwardness in the shortest possible time and develop a real Bolshevist tempo in the promotion of its economy. There is no other way. Therefore Lenin said during the October days: "Either death or catching up with and passing the advanced capitalist countries."

We are 50 to 100 years behind the advanced countries. We must cover this distance within 10 years. We must either do that or be trodden under foot.

It is this that dictates to us our obligation towards the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union.

But we have other, more serious and important obligations, namely, obligations towards the world proletariat. These last are in agreement with our obligations to the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union, but we place them higher. The working class of the Soviet Union is a part of the working class of the world. We are winning, thanks not only to the efforts of the working class of the Soviet Union, but also thanks to the support of the international working class. Without this support we should have been swallowed up long ago. It is said that our country is the shock brigade of the proletarians of all countries. That is well said. But for the sake of what, is the international proletariat supporting us? Whereby do we merit this support? We merit it because we were the first to plunge into the fight against capitalism, because we were the first to set up the workers' power and that we have been the first to commence to build up socialism. We merit this support because we are accomplishing something which if successful will transform the whole world and emancipate the whole of the working class. What, however, is necessary for success. Liquidation of our backwardness, development of a higher Bolshevist tempo in the building up of Socialism. We must move forward at such a pace that the working class of the whole world which is watching us can say, here is our advance guard, here is our shock brigade, here is our workers' power, here is our fatherland—the cause of Soviet Russia is our cause; well, we shall support it against

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the capitalists and fan flames of the world revolution. Must we justify the hopes of the international working class. Yes, we must, if we do not wish to be defeated in the end.

These are our obligations.

You see that they dictate to us the Bolshevik tempo of our development.

I am not saying that in the last few years nothing has been accomplished in regard to the running of industry. Something has been achieved, and in fact very much. We have doubled the production of industry compared with pre-war times. We have created the greatest agricultural production in the world. We should have been able to do even more however if we had striven in this time to learn really to master production, to acquire a knowledge of its technique and its financial and economic side.

In ten years at the most we must cover the distance separating us from the advanced countries of capitalism. We possess all the " objective " possibilities for this. We lack only the ability correctly to utilise these possibilities. That however depends upon us, only upon us ! It is time that we learnt to utilise these possibilities. It is time to put an end to the reprehensible attitude of non-interference in production. It is time that we adopted another, a new attitude appropriate to the present period : to interfere in everything. Are you a director of a factory ? then interfere in everything. Let nothing escape you. Learn and again learn. The Bolsheviks must acquire a knowledge of technique. It is time that the Bolsheviks became specialists. In the reconstruction period technique decides everything. And a manager who does not learn technique and does not desire to learn it, is a joke but no manager. It is said that it is hard to acquire a knowledge of technique. That is not true. There are no strongholds which the Bolsheviks cannot capture. We have solved far more difficult tasks. We have captured power. We have diverted the middle peasants on to the path of Socialism. We have already accomplished what is most important from the standpoint of socialist construction. There is still a trifle left for us to do : to learn the technique, to acquire a knowledge of science. And when we have done that we shall adopt such a tempo as we do not even venture to dream of to-day. We shall, however, do this if we really have the will.

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THE WORKERS' COUNTER-OFFENSIVE

By WILLIAM RUST

THE Lancashire weavers have gained a spectacular victory over the cotton employers. The attempt to introduce the more-loom system has been smashed and after a six weeks struggle, the lock-out was lifted by the employers without qualification. The meaning of this victory must not be under-estimated. The Labour Government has been defeated by the mass action of the working class. The weavers' success calls a halt in the capitalist offensive, provides a breathing space for the working class and is a clarion call to every section of the workers to organise the counter-offensive against the capitalist onslaught.

The victory of the weavers has finally disposed of a widespread opinion, that strikes cannot be won in this period of capitalist decline and economic crisis: a view expressed even in articles contributed to the Labour Monthly. It has demonstrated that strikes have been defeated only because of the treachery of the trade union bureaucracy who have deliberately set out to destroy working class solidarity and to impose the employers' terms. This is a lesson which will not be lost on the workers in other industries.

The magnificent success in Lancashire was achieved under extraordinarily difficult conditions. The operatives had been betrayed all along the line by the trade union officialdom, notably when the wage cuts made by arbitration were enforced in 1929 and when the more-loom experiment was introduced in Burnley, and the 20—1 ballot vote for its immediate cessation deliberately flouted.

The Labour Government had carried on a persistent propaganda in favour of wage cuts and the more-loom system and did not hesitate to violate the no-negotiation ballot and to openly side with the employers. When all other strike-breaking hopes had failed, " Left " leaders, local and national, pressed their way to the centre of the stage garbed as " rebels" and with schemes of rationalisation (plus socialistic dressing). Moreover, the industry is in collapse and nearly half of the weavers are unemployed and never likely to obtain a job. Certainly not favourable conditions for the successful waging of an economic struggle.

Why was it then that the weavers succeeded in ending the retreat and series of defeats unbroken since 1926? Because the lessons of the mighty General Strike deeply imbedded in the consciousness of the masses are now being applied by a working class whose will to struggle is deepening

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under the blows of the capitalist offensive. The chief lesson of the General Strike was the imperative need for a new revolutionary policy and leadership to re-unite the forces of the working class and to rout the old treacherous leadership which has completely gone over to the camp of the capitalist enemy. A whole series of events can be cited to prove that the working class are learning this lesson and to show that the weavers' victory was not a passing achievement due to the particularly unfavourable situation of the cotton employers, but the result of experience and the sustained efforts of the new revolutionary leadership now being forged.

In fact, one may say that the employers' front broke in its weakest spot because the weavers entered their struggle with the memories of the Bradford wool strike fresh in their minds and with the example of how the miners were defeated by arbitration before their eyes.

To declare that the weavers' victory was due solely to the efforts of the Minority Movement would be wrong on the face of it. The independent strike committees set up in Lancashire exercised, in the main, only a propagandist influence. Their organisation was weak, they were not elected bodies with roots in the mills and there were very many towns where no Minority Movement machinery existed at all. But it would be equally wrong to dismiss the vital part played by the Communist Party and Minority Movement both before and during the strike. Without the conscious energetic efforts of the new revolutionary leadership over a long period in the cotton and other industries, the weavers would not have won their battle.

The struggle in Burnley against the more-loom experiment in 1930 was waged only by the Minority Movement and Communist Party. Mass demonstrations were held, anti-rationalisation propaganda was poured out and the Report of the Government's Cotton Commission was subjected to a scathing exposure. Throughout the strike the drive was made to set up rank and file strike committees on the basis of a positive programme of action and the exposure of the trade union bureaucracy, Labour Government and " Lefts " as the agents of the capitalists.

The fight of the woollen workers last year against the MacMillan Award was conducted under the banner of the Minority Movement and although the operatives were ultimately defeated, they were not demoralised. They fought for nine weeks despite the treachery of the union leaders who had planned to nip the struggle in the bud and to enforce the wage cuts without even the semblance of a strike. The woollen workers were driven back, but the lessons of their struggle was not lost to them or to other sections of the workers. For the first time the new leadership showed itself in an organised form in a large scale strike. Then came the struggle of the miners in December and January. Strikes in Scotland and S. Wales were betrayed at the very moment when the

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solidarity of the miners was bringing victory within their grasp. In these struggles as in the many small strikes, the Minority Movement was to the forefront, preparing, endeavouring to lead and also explaining the meaning of the bureaucracy's triumph.

The first determined attempt to unite the struggles of the working class around the common programme of action was made last summer when the Minority Movement launched the proposed Workers' Charter containing a number of immediate demands representing the interests of the employed and unemployed workers and including such political demands as "Repeal the Trade Disputes Act" and "No Tariffs." The campaign for the Workers' Charter has played a considerable part in extending the idea of class solidarity.

It was the accumulation of these experiences that burst forth in the cotton strike enabling the Minority Movement to act decisively and the weavers as a whole to struggle with the fixed determination, not even to permit negotiations (the vote of 90,770 to 44,990 against negotiations was a vote of no confidence in the trade union officials) and to make it impossible for arbitration proposals to be put forward.

What did the weavers' strike reveal? Firstly, the grim, powerful determination of the weavers, that dogged militancy and class steadfastness of purpose, which often even runs in advance of the revolutionary leadership. Secondly, the imperative need for consolidating the forces of the Minority Movement, transforming the mass sentiment for revolutionary struggle into definite organisation in the factories and working out the new strike strategy and line of revolutionary advance along the whole front: the organisation of the workers' counter-offensive.

These are the questions now raised with a sharpness demanding immediate action.

The hesitancy and many mistakes displayed in applying the new line show that independent leadership has been treated very often as a phrase not a reality, has been limited to denunciation of the traitors without a burning conviction of the necessity for creating the new leadership in a tangible form, or belief that it would be created.

What happened in S. Wales? At the decisive moment some leading comrades engaged in the struggle hesitated, fumbled and temporised and were consequently defeated. We refer to the meeting of the Central Strike Committee set up by the Minority Movement and which met after the conference of the S. Wales Miners Federation had decided to call off the strike on the basis of accepting the mineowners' terms, empowering an "independent" Chairman to determine wage reductions. Instead of the Strike Committee deciding with conviction for carrying on the struggle in spite of this betrayal and taking immediate steps to put this

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decision into operation, it divided itself into two warring camps on the futile issue as to whether the strike should be continued on the basis of fighting for local grievances or on the direct issue of rejecting the new agreement.

Obviously only a strike committee that lacked confidence in its own policy would run aground on such a controversy as this. If the committee had not been partly demoralised by the decision of the bureaucrats to call off the strike, it would have mobilised all its forces for the carrying on of the strike, utilising all methods, including local grievances, in order to secure the maximum unity of the strikers.

The result of this hesitancy was that there were neither strikes against local grievances nor against the terms, except in one isolated case. Members of the strike committee returned to their localities to spread confusion and in some cases acted as a brake on the militancy of the masses. In Caerau, for example, the representative of the strike committee announced that if the official lodge accepted the terms, then there was to be no attempt to carry on the struggle independently. In the same area a meeting of miners willing to march to the pit top as a mass picket was advised to elect a deputation instead. Many other examples could be given to illustrate how splendid opportunities for leading the workers were lost both during the strike and on the day when the order to resume work was given.

Mistakes such as these must be sharply criticised and leaders who refuse to recognise the seriousness of these errors must be openly condemned. For unless all the rotten traditions of the past are discarded and belief in the power of the bureaucracy entirely broken it will be impossible to realise independent struggle and to organise the workers' counter-offensive. The weavers' struggle shows that there can be no excuse for what happened in S. Wales. The objective situation was ripe for turning the tide and rallying large sections of the miners in struggle against the owners and the bureaucracy. But the leadership failed, certainly it was for the line, but it ignored the opportunities of carrying it out because of passivity and opportunism.

South Wales shows that the vital question of today is to root out all mistakes and to strengthen the leadership, because the advance of the working class depends on the ability of the leadership to understand what is to be done and to do it. There will be no inevitable advance of the masses and the victory of the weavers can be turned into defeat, unless it is followed up by energetic mass work and a careful working out of the tactics of the new situation.

Comrade Stalin[1] stressed just this point in his recent address to the Industrial leaders of the Soviet Union when he said :

[1] The full text of Comrade Stalin's address will be found in this number.

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> In the history of States, in the history of countries, in the history of armies, cases have occured where there existed all the possibilities for success, for victory, but these possibilities were not used, as the leaders did not notice these possibilities, did not know how to take advantage of them, so that the armies suffered a defeat.

The ruling class are now engaged in reforming their front in order to return to the attack with redoubled ferocity. The attack extends to every section of the working class. Over five million workers are directly affected by the offensive against wages organised by the Employers' Confederation which is also shamelessly demanding a $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent. cut in unemployment benefit. The Government endeavours to conceal its complicity in this attack for fear of undermining its prestige, but the pressure of the crisis compels it to fling aside the mask as Snowden did in his notorious speech demanding " drastic and disagreeable measures " and announcing a programme of all-round cuts in wages and unemployment benefit. This threat is backed by the new Trade Union Bill, the strike clause of which goes even further than the Baldwin Act of 1927.

Against the capitalist offensive the united front of the entire working class must be built up. To overcome the isolation of the various sections of the working class, especially the division between the employed and unemployed, and to knit the sectional struggles into a general class action of the workers must be our main strategical line.

A few examples will suffice to show the pressing urgency of this development. The weavers have forced open the mills in Lancashire, but nearly half of them cannot enter because they are unemployed, permanently locked out. The offensive against the unemployed drives ahead ; thousands are being knocked off the Labour Exchange in the normal course of administration and a special effort is being made by Bondfield to force unemployed women weavers into domestic service. The imperative need for the joint fight of the employed and unemployed in the cotton industry is obvious. What is said about cotton can be applied with equal force to every other basic industry.

The seventeen days strike of the South Wales miners was conducted as a sectional struggle, even the revolutionary leadership failing to raise sharply the elementary issue of solidarity action in the other coalfields. Little attention was paid to the railwaymen despite the fact that the threatening wage cut is causing a tremendous ferment on the railways and the railway workers were directly affected as a result of the suspension of the guaranteed week in South Wales during the latter period of the strike. Railwaymen are to be found in every mining village, they come from mining families and could have been approached and won.

At the time of writing, the mineowners and the Labour Government are endeavouring by all means in their power to continue the division of the miners, district by district. Once again the attempt is being made

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to isolate the decisive district of South Wales, to crush it and then to deal with the other districts in turn.

This sectionalism can only be overcome and the strategy of the capitalists defeated provided the independent leadership is thoroughly convinced of the revolutionary character of the mass struggles of the working class and possesses a deep-rooted confidence in the power of the masses to forge the revolutionary way out of the present crisis. Otherwise we play into the hands of the opportunist leaders and give full scope to their weapons.

> The entire gist of *opportunism* is in the attempt to sow lack of confidence in the working class in its own fighting powers, to demoralise it before battle, and to push it towards capitulation, so as to enable the class enemy to bind it hand and foot. But the *task of the revolutionaries is to intensify the preparation of the working class for the impending and decisive revolutionary battles*. (5th Congress of the Red International of Labour Unions.)

The fifth Congress of the R.I.L.U., the decisions of which are so far little known in Great Britain, dealt in great detail with the whole question of strike strategy and with commendable clarity emphasised that :

> R.I.L.U. supporters have, as their task, to develop in the masses in the process of the economic strikes, the realisation of the need of more and more linking up the immediate economic demands with the general proletarian class demands, without the slightest slackening in the struggle for the smaller demands which were presented at the outset. Correct *political slogans* in connection with economic struggles can most clearly impart to them the character of a genuine, conscious battle of " class against class."

It is in this spirit that the Minority Movement puts forward the Workers' Charter and concentrates its energies on the organisation of the National Convention on April 12. The old idea of the Charter as a mere conglomeration of immediate demands to be fought for as something in themselves and without relation to the daily struggles of the working class is now being quickly dispelled. The six points of the Workers' Charter must be viewed as a platform for uniting the entire working class at this stage of the struggle in Britain, the unifying connection between the workers in every industry, the programme to be raised to the forefront in every economic struggle as the means of developing that struggle on to a higher level, " a genuine, conscious battle of ' class against class.' "

The Workers' Charter has already awakened a splendid response in the ranks of the most militant workers, enabling them to see the general line of advance in the battle against the combined forces of the employers, Labour Government and trade union officialdom, which are only strong because the working class is divided and has not succeeded as yet in uniting its forces around a common programme of action. To penetrate into ever wider sections of the masses with the clarion cry of the Workers'

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Charter, and to build up organisation around it, is the link in the chain that must be grasped in order to call up all the legions of the great army of labour for the counter-offensive of the working class against capitalism.

The coming Charter Convention will not be a gathering of working-class delegates merely to discuss and to decide upon a series of immediate demands; it will be a conference of the leaders of an army closing its ranks and re-equipping itself with new weapons. And if the lessons of the weavers' victory are quickly consolidated and applied in every sphere of the class struggle with that fiery conviction characteristic of the early Chartists, it will go down in history as marking the turning point from the defensive: a gigantic step towards the new General Strike under revolutionary leadership, the gateway to the Workers' Dictatorship.

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THE COTTON WEAVERS' STRUGGLE AND VICTORY

By H. LEE.

THE victory of the Lancashire cotton weavers in their grim battle against the millowners, who were determined to introduce the more-loom system into the mills, and, thereby, also impose heavy wage reductions, marks a new and important stage in the struggles of the British working class. The drive of the employers against the workers, continuing for years, and assisted by the trade union and labour leaders, has been checked by the victory of the weavers in the war against the " more-looms per weaver " system.

Factors in the Workers' Victory.

The victory of the workers reflects a hardening of the workers' militancy, a determined, mass realisation that the workers can make no more sacrifices to a rapacious employing section; it also shows that the Labour Government's hold over the masses is weakening, and that the trade union leaders, in the face of the workers' will to struggle, were unable to operate carefully-planned acts of treachery. At the same time, the weavers' win in the struggle is connected with the fact that Lancashire cotton, one of British capitalism's most important industries, is in such a state of decline that the employers, wishful to be determined, strong and forceful, are nevertheless economically weak.

A third and vital factor responsible for the great check of the employers' attack, was the fact that in a situation where the employers, confronted with the greatest difficulties, were intent on making desperate attacks, and the workers, conscious of the worsening of conditions that were demanded, were fully determined to fight the employers, there existed an alternative revolutionary leadership, the leadership of the Minority Movement, expressing all the deepest, uncompromising, feelings of the workers. The Minority Movement, mobilising the workers on the basis of a clear policy of opposition to the employers and the trade union leaders, and the Labour Government, and organising them in rank and file strike committees, was able to provide the new leadership, concentrated in organisation, but expressing the fighting spirit of the widest sections of the workers involved in the struggle.

The struggle of the weavers therefore provides the working class with a mighty victory against a powerful section of the employers, and brings

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into the arena of the class struggle, in a more decisive way than ever, the independent alternative leadership of the revolutionary movement.

Capitalist decline in the Cotton Industry

The declining conditions of the Lancashire Cotton industry are to be seen in the great drop in its exports: from 1910 to 1913 the average total exports of cloth amounted to 6,672,737,000 linear yards; at the close of the year 1928, the total exports were 2,968,198,000 linear yards. The mills for some time have been working only fifty per cent. of capacity; unemployment in many Lancashire towns has reached the devastating figure of 50 per cent. of the insured population. There have been dozens of bankruptcies, schemes of re-arrangements in mill firms; the banks have taken a hand, and formed the great Lancashire Cotton Corporation for the purpose of absorbing 10,000,000 spindles and 3,000 looms during this year.

The employers sought the capitalist solution of shifting the burdens on to the shoulders of the working class. The cotton workers were subjected to the wage cut of 6¼ per cent. in August of 1929, and this being insufficient, plans were laid for a ruthless smashing down of the conditions of the workers. The plans for the rationalisation offensive were prepared in conferences for the reorganisation of the industry, the development of amalgamations, installation of modern machinery, the arrangement of marketing schemes, and so forth. The labels were of the I.L.P., but the kernel within the shell of this brotherly co-operation of employers, trade union leaders and Government, was the attack on the standards of the working class.

The "More-looms" System

One of the proposals of the employers for "saving the industry" was that the weavers, accustomed to running four ordinary Lancashire looms, should attend to eight of these looms, without any automatic attachments, and this to be made possible by slowing down the looms. This suggestion was made with the explanation that whilst in other countries the mills were equipped with automatic machinery, in Lancashire the employers could not afford the capital for such innovations, therefore, the weavers must adapt themselves to new conditions. "We can't get the machines," said the employers, "but we can always have the men and the women to throw into the battlefield of commercial competition."

This proposal was negotiated upon, and finally the trade union officials agreed to an experiment with "the eight looms per weaver" to be made in a number of Burnley sheds. This experiment was commended in the Government's Cotton Commission Report, as a laudable effort towards whole-hearted co-operation. On the other hand in March,

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1930, the weavers of Burnley decided, by a ballot vote, against the eight-looms system, by a majority of 20 to 1. The experiment continued, though the trade union leaders knew very well that the system would have disastrous effects on the cotton workers. Andrew Naesmith, the Secretary of the Weavers' Amalgamation, writes in the *Plebs*. (February, 1930):

> The immediate application of the scheme, no matter on what proportion of looms in a mill, means a reduction in the number of employees engaged in weaving by 40 per cent.

While the experiment was being conducted in Burnley, the county employers prepared for the general introduction of the new more-looms-per-weaver system. A new weaving piece-price list was prepared, based on the principle of each weaver looking after 6, 8, or 10 looms. The old list, drawn up about forty years ago, was based on the principle of each weaver looking after four looms. The new list contained a special clause stating that:

> Should weavers employed on any of the above systems of weaving be running a lesser number of looms than the standard number in such a system (*i.e.*, 6, 8, or 10), they shall be paid at the rate of payment per 100,000 picks woven which forms the basis of payment for that system. (*Manchester Guardian*, November 1, 1930.)

This meant that where the more looms system was not introduced, the workers, continuing to run the old four looms, would be paid on a new price list, according to Mr. A. Naesmith (in the article quoted above), " 17s. to 24s. per week, as against their present wage of 39s. for four looms on plain grey cloths."

Thus, the proposals for the more-looms system, with the new piece-price list, were a cover for a huge attack on the wages of the cotton weavers. It was made clear that it would be impossible to introduce the " eight-looms-per-weaver system " into those weaving centres where fancy cloths were woven. But there the new wages list would operate, and the more-looms system was camouflage for the heavy wage reductions.

Negotiations and Trade Union Treachery

The employers proposed to commence the general introduction of the new system, with the new list, on January 5th, and the trade union leaders, after negotiating on the question of a minimum wage (not being opposed to the eight-looms system), called a strike in the ten mills in Burnley where the eight-looms system was operating. The Burnley employers answered with a lock-out in their mills, and soon after the county employers locked out the whole of the weavers, and the forces were massed for struggle.

The Labour Government, through its leaders and Labour conciliation officers, attempted to make peace. The Trade Union leaders, who for

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years have been corrupted by Lancashire's imperialist profits, were not against the proposals of the employers. Within a very short time they were able to " narrow down their differences " with the employers to the question of the number of mills where further experiments with the more-looms system were to be conducted. The workers, on the other side, were more determined than ever to fight against the employers. This determination was shown in the ballot on negotiations, taken in the early days of the lock-out.

At a Conference of the Weavers' Amalgamation in Bury, a decision was taken, on the fighting initiative of the Minority Movement fraction, to hold a ballot of the members on the question of giving the Executive power to negotiate with the employers on the question of the more-looms system. In spite of a cunningly-worded ballot paper and a great press and trade union campaign for negotiations, the ballot figures were 90,770 against giving power to the officials, 44,990 for; a majority of 45,780 against the officials of the Amalgamation. These figures are for the whole county; in some centres, such as the cockpit of Burnley and Nelson, the majorities were 25, and 20 to 1.

This ballot vote indicated that the workers realised that to give power to the officials was to accept the proposals of the employers. The workers gained strength in the fight; at a second Amalgamation conference held in Manchester, on February 7th, the delegates from the districts, by a decisive vote refused to give powers for negotiations. In a press statement issued after the conference, the leaders of the Amalgamation stated that the Council of the Amalgamation had refused to the Central Committee power " to discuss the principle of more looms to a weaver—never mind wages and conditions . . . . they are adamant against the eight-looms system." (*Manchester Guardian*, February 9, 1931.)

This refusal of the workers to give power to the leaders to negotiate with the masters became the dominating factor in defeating the employers at this stage of the struggle.

The Central Rank-and-File Strike Committee

The firm stand of the workers was not a simple, spontaneous action. For a period before the Burnley strike, the Cotton Workers' Minority Movement had conducted a vigorous mass campaign in Burnley against the more-looms system. By agitation at the mills, where the experiments were being made, and by developing the mass opposition inside the Union, the whole temper of the workers was raised. This was a campaign of preparation, and immediately the strike started the necessary steps were taken to set up the organs for independent struggle. This strike machinery was set up on the basis of rank-and-file mass meetings and conferences, but, with the lessons of the Bradford woollen strike ever

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present, the task of organising strike committees on the basis of the mills was brought to the forefront as the main and most important organisational aim.

The Local Strike Committees in several centres were co-ordinated in the Central Rank-and-File Strike Committee, which based its activities on the following programme :

(1) Against the More-Loom system and for the old piece price list.
(2) Against the Graham Committee Report ; against Rationalisation and speeding up (More Looms, the Automatic, &c.) and against Arbitration.
(3) Against any attack upon the present wages and conditions, (the attack upon the Bleachers and Dyers, &c.).
(4) For the return of the 6.4 per cent. on wages, which was taken off in 1929 by Labour Government Arbitration (for a 25 per cent. wage increase for piecers.)
(5) For an immediate fight against unemployed girl and women textile workers being forced into Domestic Service.
(6) For the Repeal of the Trades Disputes Act.

The Workers Stand Firm

The Central Rank-and-File Strike Committee working under the leadership of the National Minority Movement, whilst by no means covering the whole county, and having only slender roots in the individual mill masses, was able, by its clear policy, active campaigning, careful analysis and correct interpretation of the mood of the masses, to provide the leadership for influencing decisively the course of the struggle in its most critical stages. The call for the ballot was issued by the Minority Movement Fraction at the Conference, and the campaign for " No Negotiations " was conducted in a lively energetic manner, with the result of an over-whelming majority against the trade union officials.

This was seen in the decisions of the Weavers' Amalgamation conference of February 7, when every attempt was made to settle the dispute, lengthy consultation having taken place with the Labour Government. The Central Rank-and-File Strike Committee organised a deputation of 25 weavers, who demonstrated outside the conference, and forced their way inside the conference, making a sharp appeal to the delegates, in the name of the workers, not to give the leaders powers, and for the continuance of the fight against the more-looms system. This incursion of the voice of the struggling workers, on to the very stage set for settlement, influenced many of the rank-and-file delegates and raised the shadow of the mass of the workers over the conference.

The Rank-and-File Committee did not confine its activities to issuing clear leads and demonstrative propaganda, but undertook much practical work. Together with the Workers' International Relief Organisation

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it opened up communal food centres, raised the mass agitation for adequate and unconditional relief, organising, in the last days of the lock-out, a march of weavers to the county authorities in Preston, and issuing the call to all workers to join in the fight against the capitalists, by linking forces with the cotton workers. The call for " All Out " did not reach the stage beyond propaganda, but the organisation of mass picketing at a mill where blacklegs were working on eight-looms, showed the possibilities of working to realise such a policy for the mobilisation of solidarity action.

The mass iron determination of the workers was expressed in the alternative leadership of the Central Strike Committee of the Minority Movement, and this has created in Lancashire, for the first time, a wide chasm between the trade union bureaucracy and the masses of workers. In defeating the employers, the workers have also defeated the treachery of their own leaders.

The I.L.P. Exposed

The fighting mood of the workers, and the growing strength of the new revolutionary leadership, drove the I.L.P. and " lefts " in the Local Associations of the Union organisation, to try and make some show of militancy. The I.L.P. attempted to divert the workers from the road of mass struggle into the by-path of parliamentary action, in order to force the hands of Labour Government. A " rebel " delegation of I.L.P. weavers' officials waited on the Government, the Lancashire Division of the I.L.P. passed resolutions, and Mr. J. Maxton, M.P., moved a resolution in the House of Commons, which included the following :

> It [the House] affirms that no permanent settlement of the wages problem of the industry, and no restoration of its prosperity is possible without fundamental reorganisation designed to end wasteful competition and overlapping, to eliminate the effects of watered capital, to re-equip many sections of the industry, and to bring the whole industry, from the purchase of raw cotton to the merchanting at home and abroad, under the authority of a Cotton Control Board, representing all interests, including the trade unions concerned and the nation as a whole, with wide powers for reorganising the industry and for making adequate provision, with or without State assistance, for pensioning or compensating workers deprived of their livelihood by such organisation.

This was a resolution of capitalist rationalisation, suitable to the interests of the employers, and aimed at deceiving the workers. This manoeuvre was exposed, and in the localities, the I.L.P. branches and members were tested before the workers on the basis of the united front approach for action to win the struggle.

The Fight Continues

The crisis in the cotton industry is not overcome ; during the struggle the employers' Federation chairman, Mr. J. Grey, declared that they

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were " contending for a big principle, the right to introduce methods into the mills, in order to effect economies, and against any opposition, no matter how powerful it was." In their statement on the calling-off of the lock-out, and dropping of the eight-looms system in the Burnley mills, they speak of the continued competitive struggle, the need to discuss matters in a better atmosphere, as well as the critical national economic situation brought to their notice by the Government; (Mr. Snowden's speech on February 11 on the Budget deficit, and the need for a ten per cent. cut all round).

The more looms battle has been won, but the struggle continues, and will continue, until, under the leadership of the Communist Party, the forces of the working class can be mobilised for the seizure of power, and the establishment of the revolutionary dictatorship of the working class. The Communist Party explained, in the struggle, the fundamental class issues involved, and through the *Daily Worker* gave the daily leadership to the workers, as well as pointing out the role of the weavers' struggle in the present mass strike movement in Great Britain.

This victory of the cotton textile workers, following on the recent defeat by betrayal in the Scottish and Welsh coalfields, gives the call of a vanguard to the whole working class, engaged in a bitter struggle to maintain their wage standards and working conditions. The Central Strike Committee decided, on the conclusion of the lock-out, to consolidate their gains. In their *Strike Victory Bulletin* they say:

> The position of the cotton capitalists is desperate. Even in the hour of defeat they, with the Labour Government are searching and seeking for new ways to attack the workers' standards. Now is the time for the cotton workers to advance still further, joining hands with the workers in all the main industries whose conditions are also being attacked. *In the front rank of united working-class defence and counter-attack; in the mighty Charter movement must be the victorious textile workers of Lancashire.*

To do this it has been decided to utilise the forces of the Strike Committees for the formation of permanent Minority Movement organisation in the Cotton Industry, based upon Mill Groups and Mill Committees, leading the fight inside the mills on the daily grievances and building a mass opposition inside the unions. In this way the gains of the struggle, the new experiences of the workers, the development of the class consciousness of new masses, will be brought under the leadership of the Minority Movement and the Communist Party, for the development of the bigger, wider fight of the working class against their class enemies, and for working class power.

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ENGINEERING WORKERS, BE PREPARED!

By JACK TANNER

FOLLOWING the Miners, Textile Workers, and Railwaymen, the Engineering Workers are now faced with a determined attack aiming at drastic alterations in their conditions. This offensive of the engineering employers has been well planned, preparations have been going on for some time, and propaganda has been spread with the object of weakening the morale of the workers.

In November of last year the Engineering Employers' Federation issued a 68-page pamphlet entitled, *British Engineering Industry—Realities and Problems*, which had a very wide circulation, being given away to the employees of firms that were members of the Federation. It showed that the engineering industry covers a variety of distinct industries, the main sub-divisions being: foundry working; marine engineering; boilermaking; locomotive building; general engineering; electrical engineering; motor car, commercial car and motor cycle manufacture; machine tool manufacture; textile machine manufacture; agricultural machine manufacture.

The pamphlet gave a general review of the trade of the country and contained over 30 tables, giving figures of unemployment in the chief industries, statistics regarding the exports and imports of machinery, rates of wages, taxation, the cost of social services, &c.

It opened with the statement that "British engineering is in a very grave position," pointed out that engineering is a finishing industry and went on to show how external factors and costs in other industries affected and increased the cost of the engineering product. The cost of social services was particularly stressed, in fact it was the object of the pamphlet to get the engineering worker to believe that the only remedy for bad conditions and unemployment was to accept even worse conditions by working harder for longer hours at less wages, and when out of work to receive reduced unemployment benefit for a shorter period.

On December 11, a month after the issue of this booklet, the Employers' Federation sent a letter to the Unions inviting them to a conference to consider the whole question of wages and working conditions in the industry. This conference was held in London on January 30, 1931,

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there being present 110 delegates from 43 unions and 90 representatives on the employers' side.

Sir Allan Smith, Chairman of the Engineering Employers' Federation, in opening the proceedings, having expressed, as he said, "our goodwill towards you," proceeded to business. It will be illuminating as to the actual condition of affairs if we quote verbatim some of his remarks:

> Our actual trading balance is likely to be reduced from £151,000,000 in 1929 to something in the neighbourhood of £100 millions in 1930, a decline of 33 per cent.
>
> The increase in unemployment, in the main engineering groups, comparing January with December, 1930, is about 120 per cent. The trade union statistics of unemployment are equally impressive; the A.E.U., for example, taking the home branches, and excluding sick and superannuated, had, in 1929, unemployment averaging about six per cent. In 1930 it increased from 6.8 per cent. in January to 19.8 per cent. in December, an increase of nearly 200 per cent. Similarly, with the patternmakers, whose unemployment in 1929, on the same basis as the A.E.U., averaged about five per cent. In January, 1930, it was 6.6 per cent., and in December, 1930, it was 22.9 per cent., an increase of 250 per cent. What outlook can we have with patternmakers' unemployment standing at practically 23 per cent. of their membership?
>
> (Patternmakers make wood-patterns for castings, &c., and are the first to be employed in the industry.)
>
> The engineering industry is a finishing industry, and as such is subject to a burden of pre-charges which have to be borne in the field of international competition to an extent exceeding that borne by any other industry. High wages and production costs in coal-mining, iron and steel, transport, and in the whole range of sheltered industries react immediately, and repeatedly on the engineering industry, and on those engaged in it.
>
> It might be a good thing if the workpeople who are directly engaged in exporting industries were to get together with the employers and bring some influence to bear on the non-exporting industries and occupations who are in fact living on them.
>
> Machinery exports have declined in value from £54 million in 1929 to £47 million in 1930. There is little change in the value per ton. The decline is due to the reduction in volume from 562,000 tons in 1929 to 481,000 tons in 1930.
>
> Ocean freights and time charter rates fell to new low levels in the course of 1930.

Sir Allan Smith referred to particulars of iron and steel production and consumption over a period of years. For 1930, the position is shown by the following figures:

1930.	Production. Tons.	Retained Imports. Tons.	Exports. Tons.	Consumption. Tons.
January	1,421,100	309,178	351,846	1,378,400
December	687,000	282,567	169,544	800,000

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As Sir Allan remarked on these figures, " they are not very helpful or hopeful." On the question of costs he went on to say :

> In 1921 the Federation was seriously concerned about the state of the industry, so much so that in that and in the succeeding year we had to ask you to consider with us reductions of wages in the hope that thereby production costs would be so reduced as to enable us to compete successfully with foreign manufacturers. We have found that even with the wages reductions which were then operated and with the strictest economy in manufacture we have not been able to compete.
>
> Had we settled down to a consideration of the main problems in 1924 the present position of the industry might have been averted. Six valuable years have been lost. The industry is now in a desperate position, and we cannot lose more time.
>
> . . . We have to recognise our responsibilities, which include the maintenance of employment as high as possible and the satisfaction of our customers ; these responsibilities, hard relentless economic facts, now preclude, and have for years past precluded, our sympathetic feelings taking active or material shape. We cannot be influenced by emotional appeal. Facts are our masters and your masters, and the sooner that is realised by everyone the better it will be for all.

The foregoing from the mouth of the employers' chairman gives a clear indication as to the serious decline in the engineering industry, and the employers' attitude. Great Britain is no longer the workshop of the world. There are other workshops and they have no intention of closing down. The Empire Marketing Board now advertises Britain as " The workshop of the Empire "—while Indian pig-iron is being imported into this country in thousands of tons—and 75 per cent. of the blast furnaces here are shut down. The attitude of Sir Allan Smith must have given pain to his audience of trade union officials. No more emotional appeals ! Sympathy is dead ! Only hard, relentless facts can master the engineering employers. Those facts that are the masters of the employers and the officials are the actions of the workers in the industry !

Nothing was said as to the increased productivity of the workers as a result of rationalisation, new machines and increased speeding up methods, which has resulted in reducing the percentage of labour per unit cost, from about 33 per cent. to 10 per cent.

The works director of Austin Motors recently stated that in that firm from 1925 to 1930, the number of workers per car was reduced from 63 to 13 ! He also said :

> High earnings are a great benefit to any community. But they must be real and calculated literally on a scale which pay in units based on the amount of sweat given off by the worker. Nothing else is real.

With the object of getting the workers to appreciate the " realities " of life the employers are demanding :

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1. An increase in the working week to 48 hours, with no increase of pay. (Present hours are 47; thus this in effect means a reduction of ¼d. per hour.)
2. Reduction in overtime rates to time-and-a-quarter for the first four hours, then time-and-a-half after. No overtime to be paid until a full week of 48 hours has been worked.
   (The present rate is time-and-a-half till midnight, then double time, each day standing by itself.)
3. Reduction in night shift rate to time, plus one-ninth, also increase in hours, overtime at time-and-a-quarter.
   (Present rate is time-and-a-third, and overtime on nightshift paid at time-and-two-thirds.)
4. Double day and/or three-shifts system.
   (At present the first shift works 43 hours, for which 47 hours is paid; the second shift works 37½ hours, for which 47 hours are paid; the third shift works 37½, for which 50 hours is paid.)
   Employers demand: third shift shall be paid night-shift rate (time-and-one-ninth) for hours worked.
5. Payment by results to be reduced from time-and-a-third to time-and-a-quarter.
6. Manning of Machines.—On this matter a good deal was said. The employers demand the right to appoint any class of labour they consider suitable to work machines and to determine the conditions under which they shall be worked. For years this has been a question of grave importance in the industry. The skilled unions endeavouring to retain for their members, at skilled rates, the work now performed on new machines, or by new methods. The semi-skilled unions have been prepared to meet the employers on the grading of workers and machines.

In this connection it is interesting to note the increase in the number of semi-skilled workers employed in the industry. The percentage of different workpeople in the engineering industry was, in:

	Skilled.	Semi-skilled.	Unskilled.
1914	60%	20%	20%
1921	50%	30%	20%
1926	40%	45%	15%

In seven years, from 1914 to 1921, the semi-skilled increased by 10 per cent., but from 1921 to 1926 in five years the increase was a further 15 per cent.

A very brief reference was made to the questions of non-union and female labour, but a great more lies behind the fact that these two questions "have emerged." If the employers can break down the

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resistance of the unions on the manning of machines, much more female labour will be employed at considerably lower rates. According to figures issued in July, 1928, there were over 280,000 females, out of a total of 2,000,000 insured persons engaged in the metal trades.

Regarding wages, the employers stated that if they could not secure prompt and adequate relief for the industry by adjustments in the working conditions, or if the present depression is prolonged or intensified, they will be compelled to deal with the general wages question.

How will the unions meet this attack of the employers? At the present time all of them are in a very critical financial position, as a result of the increased and continued unemployment, and loss of membership, which has meant a reduced income and a tremendous increase in their expenditure. Practically all have either raised their contributions or imposed levies, and cut their benefits. For the past five years the unions have been functioning 75 per cent. as Friendly Societies and 25 per cent. as trade unions and have not been effective as either.

The decline of capitalism has automatically brought about the decline of the unions. With a constitution based on conditions of 50 years ago, with a policy of co-operation with capitalism, that at the most asked and expected slight reforms and concessions from the employers, it is only natural they should decline.

While the officials will express their opposition to the employer's proposals, it will only be by words.

All engineering workers knew two years ago that this attack was pending, as also did the officials. But the trade union leaders have made no efforts to prepare resistance, no attempts to rouse the workers. But who indeed would expect them to do such things? On the contrary, so far as the A.E.U. is concerned, the E.C. have definitely failed to carry out a decision of the Union's National Committee passed in 1929, calling upon the E.C. to conduct an intensive campaign amongst engineering workers to popularise a nine-point Charter, covering the questions of wages, hours, setting up of shop and factory committees, &c.

Last year the National Committee reaffirmed its Charter and condemned the Executive Committee for failing to operate the resolutions. The Executive Committee has been opposed to any action by their members in resisting the persistent encroachment on conditions by the employers; they have steadfastly opposed the taking of a ballot vote by the members on the termination of the York Memorandum (the provisions for avoiding disputes, negotiating machinery existing since 1914), which has almost killed the spirit of the members.

They have, for the last five years, expressed their belief and hope in a revival of trade, and urged the building up of the finances and the

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union so we should be able to go forward when that unjustified belief was realised.

Their attitude will be, and it has already been hinted at by them, that the unions are not in a position to fight, because of the unemployment and lack of finance. Further, that with the large number of unions concerned, and their varied interests, it will not be possible to get a united resistance to the employers.

But that united resistance can be obtained against the employers' attack, in the factories and workshops, that is where the solidarity should and can be created. The militant workers must now create their committees of action, embracing all workers, organised and unorganised male and female, and in close co-operation with the unemployed workers' committees, set up District and Area Committees covering the engineering centres.

This will be a historical year for the engineering workers and will decide the future of their unions. That a successful resistance can be put up against the employers' attack has been proved by the weavers in their recent struggle. There are thousands of class-conscious workers in the engineering industry; if they will get into the field now, agitating, rousing the workers to resist and organising committees of action, we shall be able to defeat the employers' attack and certainly make a definite step forward in the class struggle.

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LESSONS OF THE STRIKE IN SOUTH WALES

By BEN FRANCIS

> " *The situation in the mining industry raises revolutionary perspectives before the whole of the working class, for coal, which was the basis for Capitalist development, is still a decisive factor in the economy of British capitalism in its decline. The whole history of the Labour Movement has shown that the conditions of the miners are a determining factor in regard to the workers' conditions as a whole. Therefore in the coming period, the miners' fight more than ever becomes the fight of the whole working class* " (" The Fight of the Miners." C.P.G.B. 6d.)

THE recent strike marks the turning point for the revolutionary movement in South Wales. For the first time in our history, the militant miners were confronted with the task, on a mass scale, of putting into practice the theory of independent leadership of struggle. How they reacted to the situation is not only of importance to the workers in South Wales, but to the British working class generally.

The S.W.M.F. bureaucracy and the Labour Government stand committed to enforcing upon the South Wales miners a three-years' agreement, which, after passing through the hands of the " independent " chairman, will mean *Three Years Harder Labour for Less Bread !* That the miners will resist the imposition of these slave terms is a foregone conclusion. But it is equally certain that the reformist trade unions will use every endeavour to get the men to accept these terms and by manœuvres try to stifle any action that is likely to upset this arrangement.

Therefore the onus of leading the miners into struggle against the combined attack of the coalowners, Labour Government and the reformist trade unions, rests upon the shoulders of the revolutionary opposition of the Communist Party and Miners' Minority Movement. *Independent leadership is no longer a theory but a vital necessity.* It is therefore of decisive importance, not only to review the 18 days of strike action, but also to critically examine the work done in the period prior to January 1, noting all our weaknesses, our failures and our successes and, by strengthening where we are weak, learning by our mistakes and taking every advantage of our successes to consolidate our influence, steeling ourselves to face up to the tremendous tasks lying ahead.

All the factors of the decline of British capitalism and developing crisis making for intensive struggle were present in the South Wales

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coalfield. Presented in hard cash, the situation can be judged from the fact that since 1927 the miners of South Wales had had their wages cut by over £7,000,000, whilst the coalowners claimed losses for the same period of over £4,000,000.

The influence of this crisis had a revolutionising effect on the South Wales miners, which was reflected in their growing militancy and preparedness to struggle against any attack on their wages. These factors made a struggle in the South Wales Coalfield inevitable.

In this developing crisis it became clear that the role of the South Wales Miners' Federation was that of the chief bulwark of the capitalists. As the struggle became more acute, we saw the inevitable discrepancy between the interests of the workers and the actions of the reformists and their machinery of organisation. At a very early stage in the Mond-Turner campaign of Industrial Peace and Mondism, the S.W.M.F. Executive had voiced its approval. This development towards Social Fascism could not stop there. The logical sequel, under stress of severe and continued economic crisis, was to open Fascism.

Lack of Revolutionary Preparation

What was the position of the revolutionary opposition? Despite its numerical weakness, the Minority Movement existed in name only. The Communist Party had organised a very good Mining Campaign in July, against the Labour Government's Coal Bill, emphasising the need of preparations to resist its operations, yet from July to the end of September very little was done in the way of preparing for the struggle—we were not even utilising such campaigns as the 100 per cent. campaign in the Rhondda for this purpose. How else can we explain the resolution of the District Committee of the Communist Party on the 100 per cent. campaign, published last October, which contains but a sparse reference to the coming struggle, and in which there is no reference to the wage negotiations then proceeding between the Executive Council of the S.W.M.F. and the coalowners.

This was all the more serious as undoubtedly this 100 per cent. campaign was organised by the bureaucracy in order to distract the attention of the miners from these very negotiations, and was the first in a whole series of manœuvres preparatory to getting across the wage reductions demanded by the coalowners.

Many mistakes were committed during this campaign and it was only during the discussion on the lessons of these that the urgent necessity of preparing for the coming struggle in the coalfield was brought sharply to the forefront. Even then no clarion call to prepare for action was sent forth! Instead of mobilising our forces for struggle, we frittered away three weeks of valuable time in discussing a programme of demands

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which we placed in opposition to that of the S.W.M.F. Executive. As though either of these programmes of demands would play any decisive part in the conduct of the struggle!

It was not until the beginning of November, 1930, that is, within four weeks of December 1, that there was any real preparation made for the coming struggle. A call was then issued for Committees of Action, under the leadership of the Miners' Minority Movement, to prepare for December 1. Had these decisive steps been taken earlier, our position would have been a far stronger one than it was on December 1.

This state of affairs could only have come about as the result of political unclarity and a positive failure to understand the rôle and tasks of a revolutionary opposition in such a crisis.

This had tremendous consequences for us, for the bureaucracy were playing a very clever rôle at this period. Having issued their programme of demands for the sole purpose of deluding the workers into thinking they intended to fight, they calmly proceeded to ignore the rank and file. For the critical period of November, only in a few places, and those were where the militant forces were most active such as Caerau and Maesteg, were any T.U. meetings called to even receive reports on the negotiations. Never in the whole history of the South Wales Coalfield had such a situation been experienced before, a state of affairs which meant the complete negation of trade union democracy.

The South Wales Conference on November 29, 1930, marked another stage in the development to open Fascism. In advocating to this conference the acceptance of the "spreadover," Tom Richards, Privy Councillor, General Secretary S.W.M.F., and President M.F.G.B., did not hesitate, in his desire to carry out the dictates of his real masters, the coal bosses, to violate all the canons of trade unionism, and by means of camouflage and political chicanery he succeeded in his purpose.

Our failure to raise an effective opposition at this conference and against the operation of its decisions revealed in a clear fashion how isolated we were from the masses and the weakness of our work within the Federation. Further, December 1, 1930, revealed that even in this period leading comrades did not believe in independent leadership, putting forward, against going to the pit heads on this date, the Conference and Lodge decisions, our weak forces, no Committees of Action, &c. That our line calling for strike action against the spreadover and Conference decisions was correct, was borne out by the strikes at the Hafod, Tarreni and Great Mountain collieries.

Why have I analysed so closely the events leading up to December 1? *Because, in my opinion, they show the root of our failure to prepare for January 1, and also the basic weakness displayed by the revolutionary*

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opposition when the bureaucracy betrayed the miners of South Wales on January 17.

The Unexpected Strike

The strike on January 1 came almost as a bolt from the blue, and we had not fully recovered from the shock on January 19 when the men had returned to work. But what happened during December? The first three weeks were spent chiefly in analysing the situation and convincing some comrades of the mistakes committed on December 1. How little we visualised the possibility of strike action on January 1, 1931, can be seen from the fact that the whole tenor of the discussion at the meeting on December 27 of the Working Bureau of the Communist Party District Committee was towards preparing for March 1.

This was a clear indication of an underestimation of the growing militancy of the miners, a militancy which was enhanced by the working out of the spreadover in practice, and which actually compelled the bureaucracy to call the strike so that they could head it in order to betray it at the first favourable opportunity and still leave them in a sound strategic position to carry through the final betrayal.

Now for the strike itself. First and foremost, the fact that nearly 150,000 miners downed tools on January 1, despite the defeatist and betraying tactics of the S.W.M.F. officials, makes it clear, once and for all, that the radicalisation of the masses is no myth, but an actual living fact. It also proved, in face of a common attack, the unity between the unorganised and organised—only 70,000 out of 150,000 South Wales miners are organised in the ranks of the South Wales Miners' Federation.

The Miners' Minority Movement early issued a lead calling upon the miners in the struggle to organise Rank-and-File Strike Committees elected from all workers, organised and unorganised, men and women, and to band themselves under the leadership of the Central Strike Committee and the Miners' Minority Movement—pointing out that only by so doing could the struggle be carried to a successful conclusion. During the 18 days of struggle, tremendous efforts were made by the revolutionary opposition in endeavouring to wrest from the hands of the bureaucracy the leadership of the South Wales miners. That it was achieving considerable success was evident from the frantic efforts of the bureaucracy, who were prepared to resort to any tactics in order to call off the strike.

The Experience of Caerau

One of the clearest and best examples of the working out in practice of independent leadership stands out in the experience of Caerau which provides very valuable lessons. Early in November, 1930, from a meeting of 30 Charter supporters, a Committee was formed, which at once drew

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up a local programme of demands. A report of its activities being sent to the *Daily Worker*, the editorial article, quite correctly, criticised the report for its absence of any concrete tasks in preparation for the coming mining struggle. This criticism was discussed at the next Charter meeting, and was accepted as being justifiable. Arising out of a discussion on the mining situation it was decided to call a mass meeting of miners with a view to setting up a Committee of Action. This was carried out and a Committee of Action set up for the Caerau Colliery. From then on, the Charter Committee, operating through the Committee of Action, played a very important role, and undoubtedly laid the basis of future activity.

During the preparatory period up to December 1, the Committee of Action issued periodical leads to the miners of Maesteg, carefully watching each stage of the wage negotiations and exposing the manœuvres of the bureaucrats. That its influence was steadily growing, although its organisational strength did not grow as fast as its influence, was obvious, for at every meeting held by the local bureaucrats, venomous attacks were made on it from the platforms, the Miners' Agent even going so far as to appeal to the men to abstain from attending our meetings, but with no avail.

During December good work was done by the Charter Committee, and as the result of its activities in assisting to organise street meetings, &c., a delegate was sent to the Miners' Unity Conference at Sheffield. Therefore we were not totally caught unawares on January 1, and within three days of the commencement of the strike we succeeded in throwing up a Provisional Strike Committee of 14 members. From then on tremendous strides were taken. On the following Sunday over 400 attended our meetings.

The Caerau Rank-and-File Strike Committee

The following night a debate between the Vice-Chairman of the Caerau Lodge and myself on the respective merits of the Minority Movement and the Miners' Federation Policy was utilised to the best possible advantage. Not only did this debate, which was attended by over 500 workers, increase our prestige, but it aroused a high degree of enthusiasm for the strike, such as had been singularly lacking up to that period.

The result was that, from a mass meeting held on Wednesday, the seventh day of the strike, an elected Rank-and-File Committee of over 40 workers, employed and unemployed, men, women and youths, was set up. By this time a real strike atmosphere prevailed, at least in Caerau.

With the Charter Committee co-operating with the Strike Committee, raising finance by means of pennies and halfpennies from the workers at street meetings, the Charter Committee was able to send five delegates

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to the Cardiff Conference on January 10. The campaign for the sending of these delegates helped considerably in consolidating our forces and in popularising the independent leadership of the Central Strike Committee. This was the first stage of the strike.

On Sunday, January 11, there was a bumper meeting, 700 workers being present, which resulted in over 60 members being recruited for the Miners' Minority Movement. Enthusiasm now reached a high level, and on the following morning, as the result of the line of our agitation during the previous week, which had made the question of relief and the withdrawal of safety-men the most important immediate issues, hundreds presented themselves at the relieving station demanding relief. They were given forms to fill in, which, as well as asking full particulars as to number of dependents, &c., also contained a clause promising repayment of the loan.

Ever since 1921, the miners have been paying back, through the Pay Office, for the relief they received in that year or in 1926. Therefore, when a mass meeting was called on the Caerau Square that Monday morning, the strikers were unanimous that they were going to have no more of it, and it was decided to fill in the forms BUT TO DELETE THAT PORTION WHICH PROMISED REPAYMENT. A deputation was also appointed to interview the Public Assistance Committee on the matter, demanding relief on grant and not on loan, and further, the granting of relief for a strikers, married and single. On this day it was also decided to open a W.I.R. Feeding Centre in Caerau. The meeting of the Strike Committee which met on that Monday afternoon is worthy of particular attention.

After discussing the general strike, the committee proceeded to departmentalise its work, and for a start set up Finance, Propaganda and Publicity Departments as well as a W.I.R. Section. The latter were instructed to interview the Halls Committee to obtain one of their small halls for a Feeding Centre. This move did not suit the bureaucracy, and having failed to get us to consent to withhold the opening of our Centre until they had time to call a Town meeting to discuss the question of feeding generally, they refused point blank to let us have the Hall. This did not deter us and on the following Wednesday the W.I.R. Feeding Centre was opened in Caerau, and over 200 strikers were fed on the first day. From the time it was open until the Thursday after the men had gone back to work, over 2,000 meals were provided at the Feeding Centre.

The deputation having returned from interviewing the P.A.C. officials and Committee at Bridgend, they reported the result to the Strike Committee. The P.A.C. were definite on two points: first, that under no consideration would any relief be granted unless the form were returned signed promising repayment; secondly, that they could not, according to *law*, relieve single young men.

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Some comrades then put forward that it was necessary to change our line *re* signing the forms for relief—" we would be blamed if the strikers would not get relief through following our lead," &c. This dangerous line was resisted to the utmost—it would have meant the surrender of our fight for relief on grant and not on loan. It was eventually agreed to continue to advocate the deletion of the clause, at least until after the meeting of the P.A.C. at Cardiff on the following Wednesday. The correctness of this line was borne out the following day.

The Deputation to Maesteg Town Council

Tuesday, January 13, will ever be a memorable day in Caerau. In the morning a report was given by the deputation appointed the previous day. The results being unsatisfactory, two suggestions were put forward : the sending of a deputation to the Public Assistance Committee at Cardiff on Wednesday, and a mass demonstration to the Maesteg Town Council, which was meeting that evening, for the following demands : (1) relief on grant and not on loan ; (2) relief for all strikers, married *and single* ; (3) the immediate introduction of the School Feeding Act, &c. Never have I seen such a response.

The result was that 5.30 p.m. on the Caerau Square saw hundreds patiently waiting for the meeting to start, and so were the police. After a short speech, the demonstration, over 500 strong, started on its 2½ miles' walk to the Maesteg Council Chambers. The police, by warning the leaders of the consequences, &c., tried to stop it at the outset, but failed. On went the demonstration, shouting slogans—" *We Want Bread*," " *We Demand Relief*," &c. By the time it had covered a mile of the way continued additions en route had strengthened its ranks considerably, and when the police made their second attempt to stop it, it was over 1,000 strong and succeeded in brushing them on one side.

Still gathering weight, by the time the demonstration got to within a quarter-of-a-mile of Maesteg it was over 2,000 strong. But at this stage we met the final stumbling block. At the beginning of an archway, through which we had to go, the police had massed their forces to prevent us getting to the Council Chambers. Why did they succeed ? Because we had come totally unprepared to meet an armed attack. What was needed was a Workers' Defence Force ! It was finally decided that the demonstration should return but that the deputation should go forward to the Council Chamber. This they did, only to be refused admittance —and *this from a Council with a Labour majority !*

The deputation, on reporting back to the waiting crowd at Caerau, had a tremendous ovation. Had we captured the leadership of the Caerau workers ? We had. Not only had we captured the workers, but our activities had split the reformists' ranks as well. The result was

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that the Caerau Labour Women's Section sent representatives with the deputation to the P.A.C. the following day. It is not necessary to go into details on the result of this deputation—it met with the usual reception given to such deputations—a sympathetic hearing—and that was all. But the meeting held that Wednesday night to receive its report was the biggest held in Caerau for a long time. The fullest advantage was taken to expose the Labour majorities on the P.A.C. and Town Council, pointing out the necessity of electing Communist candidates to these bodies.

On Thursday it was evident that a sell out was imminent. That night the Strike Committee prepared its plans to carry on the struggle in face of the betrayal. What happened at Caerau on Sunday night, January 18, is bound up with what happened in Cardiff on the final Saturday.

What did happen in the Central Strike Committee on Saturday, January 17? A clear indication that we have not yet rid from our midst the elements of right opportunism. The discussion which took place both at the District Committee of the Communist Party and in the Strike Committee revealed once again opposition to the tactics of independent leadership. And the root causes of this Right opportunism were revealed in all their nakedness: *fear of the struggle; fear of the masses; social-democratic traditions. These, if persisted in, can only lead us straight to the camp of Social Fascism.*

Summing up—the main weakness and defects revealed by these 18 days of struggle were: our inability to transform our growing influence into organised support; to organise from below a solid United Front; to quickly adapt the forms and methods of the struggle to the changing conditions; a discrepancy between the theory of independent leadership and persistance in practice of trade union legalism.

Despite these defects, the Communist Party and Minority Movement in South Wales achieved many important results: it made considerable strides forward in winning the independent leadership of the South Wales miners and considerably widened its influence. These achievements lay the basis for future activity. We can go forward full of hope and confidence, assured that the future is ours.

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IN MEMORY OF THE PARIS COMMUNE

By V. I. LENIN

[*March*, 1931, *sees the sixtieth anniversary of the Paris Commune. The following article of Lenin, specially translated from the Russian for the* LABOUR MONTHLY, *was written in commemoration of the fortieth anniversary. It appeared in the "Rabochaya Gazeta" (Workers' Paper), of April* 15, 1911.]

FORTY years have passed since the convening of the Paris Commune. According to established custom, the French proletariat honours the memory of the makers of the Revolution of March 18, 1871 : at the end of May it will once more pay its respects at the grave of the slaughtered Communards, victims of the terrible " May days," and at their grave renew the pledge to carry on the struggle without intermission, right to the complete triumph of their ideals and the complete realisation of the cause to which they were vowed.

Why does the proletariat, not only of France, but of the whole world, look upon the participators in the Paris Commune as its own predecessors ? In what consists the inheritance of the Commune ?

The Commune arose in elemental fashion ; no-one prepared it in a conscious or planned manner. The unsuccessful war against Germany, the suffering during the siege of Paris, the unemployment amongst the proletariat and the ruin amongst the petty-bourgeoisie, the anger of the masses against the upper classes and officialdom which had exhibited a total incompetence, the confused ferment within the working class which was dissatisfied with its position and striving for a different social structure, the reactionary composition of the National Assembly giving rise to apprehension as to the fate of the republic—all this and much more combined to impel the population of Paris to the revolution of March 18, which unexpectedly transferred power into the hands of the National Guard, to the working class and its petty-bourgeois supporters.

It was an occurrence never before witnessed in history. Until then, power had generally been in the hands of the landowners and capitalists, *i.e.*, in the hands of their trusted representatives comprising the Government. After the revolution of March 18, when the Thiers Government fled out of Paris with its troops, police and officials—the people remained masters of the situation, and power passed to the proletariat. In contemporary society, however, the proletariat, economically enslaved by capital, cannot

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rule politically without first having broken the chains which bind it to capital. That is why the movement of the Commune had inevitably to take on a Socialist complexion, *i.e.*, to begin to strive for the overthrow of the rule of the bourgeoisie, the rule of capital, for the destruction of the very *foundations* of the contemporary social structure.

In the beginning, this movement was extremely confused and indefinite. Among its adherents were patriots who hoped that the Commune would renew the war against the Germans and conduct it to a favourable conclusion. It had the support also of petty shopkeepers who were threatened with ruin unless a moratorium was declared on payments of rent and bills of exchange (such a moratorium the Government did not desire to grant, but it was granted by the Commune). Finally, in the early period it had partially the sympathy even of the bourgeois republicans who were afraid that the reactionary National Assembly (the "squirearchy," the rabid landowners) would resurrect the monarchy. But the chief role in the movement was played, of course, by the workers (especially the Paris artisans) amongst whom an active Socialist propaganda had been conducted during the last years of the Second Empire and many of whom were even members of the International.

Only the workers remained faithful to the Commune to the end. The bourgeois republicans and the petty-bourgeoisie quickly deserted it; some were frightened by the revolutionary-Socialist proletarian character of the movement, others deserted it when they saw that it was destined to inevitable defeat. Only the French proletarians, without fear or fatigue, gave support to their *own* Government, only they fought and died for it, *i.e.*, for the cause of the emancipation of the working class, for a better future for all toilers.

Deserted by its previous allies and supported by none, the Commune was bound inevitably to suffer defeat. The whole bourgeoisie of France, all the landowners, stock exchange speculators, manufacturers—all the big and little thieves, all the exploiters—united against it. This bourgeois coalition, supported by Bismarck (who released from German captivity 100,000 French soldiers for the subjection of revolutionary Paris), succeeded in rousing the ignorant peasants and provincial petty-bourgeoisie against the Paris proletariat and in encircling half of Paris by an iron cordon (the other half was invested by the German army). In some of the large French towns (Marseilles, Lyons, St. Etienne, Dijon, &c.) the workers also made attemps to seize power, proclaim the Commune and come to the aid of Paris, but these attempts quickly terminated in failure; and Paris, which had first raised the banner of proletarian insurrection, was left to its own forces, and condemned to assured destruction.

For victorious social revolution the presence of at least two conditions is necessary: a high development of the productive forces, and preparedness

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on the part of the proletariat. In 1871, however, both of these conditions were absent. French capitalism was still little developed, and France was then predominantly a country of the petty bourgeoisie (artisans, peasants, shopkeepers, &c.). On the other hand, there was not in existence a workers' Party, there was no preparation and long training of the working class, which did not even clearly recognise its tasks or the means to carry them out. There was no serious political organisation of the proletariat, nor wide trade unions or co-operative organisations.....

But the chief thing which the Commune lacked was the time and freedom to orientate itself and address itself to the realisation of its programme. It had hardly advanced to the task before the Government situated in Versailles, supported by the whole bourgeoisie, embarked on acts of war against Paris. The Commune was compelled to devote itself first of all to self-defence, and right up to the end, which came during May 21-28, it had no time to give important consideration to anything else.

Nevertheless, in spite of such unfavourable conditions, in spite of the short duration of its existence, the Commune was successful in adopting some measures which sufficiently characterised its true meaning and aim. The Commune replaced the standing army, that blind weapon in the hands of the ruling classes, by universal arming of the people ; it proclaimed the separation of the church from the State, it abolished the State remuneration of priests, it gave to popular education a purely temporal character, and thereby dealt a heavy blow at the gendarmes and cassocks.

In the purely social sphere, it did not succeed in doing much, but what it did, nevertheless, clearly revealed its character as a popular workers' Government. It prohibited night work in bakeries ; it abolished the system of fines (that legalised robbery of the workers), and finally it published the celebrated decree by virtue of which all factories and workshops, deserted or put at a standstill by their owners' were handed over to the workers' associations for the revival of production. And, as if to emphasise its character as a truly democratic proletarian Government, the Commune decreed that the remuneration of all officials of the administration and Government should not exceed the normal rate of workers' wages, and in no case should be higher than 6,000 francs per year.

All these measures were sufficiently eloquent of the fact that the Commune represented a mortal threat to the old world based on enslavement and exploitation. Consequently, bourgeois society could not sleep in peace as long as the red banner of the proletariat was flying over the Municipal Building of the Paris Commune. And when, finally, the organised government forces succeeded in obtaining the upper hand over the badly organised forces of the revolution, the Buonaparte generals, beaten by the Germans, and full of valour against fugitive peasants, these

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French Rennenkampfs and Meller-Zakonelskys[1] organised such a shambles as Paris had never before seen. About 30,000 Parisians were killed by the brutalised soldiery, about 45,000 were arrested and many of them afterwards executed, thousands were sent to hard labour and banishment. As a whole, Paris lost about 100,000 of its sons, including the best workers in all occupations.

The bourgeoisie were satisfied. "Now there is an end of Socialism for a long time!", said its leader, the bloodthirsty gnome, Thiers, after the bloodbath which he and his generals had given to the Paris proletariat. But these bourgeois ravens croaked in vain. Within about six years of the suppression of the Commune, when many of its heroes were still languishing in prison and in exile, a new Labour movement had already begun in France. A new Socialist generation, enriched by the experience of its predecessors, but in no wise discouraged by their defeat, raised aloft the banner taken from the hands of the champions of the Commune, and bore it boldly and loyally forwards with the cry "Long live the Social Revolution! Long live the Commune!" And within a further couple of years the new Labour Party, and the agitation raised by it throughout the country, forced the ruling classes to liberate the Communard prisoners who still remained in the hands of the Government.

The memory of the heroes of the Commune is revered not only by the French workers but by the proletariat of the whole world. For the Commune struggled not for any local or narrow national cause but for the emancipation of the whole of toiling humanity, for all the downtrodden and oppressed. As the foremost fighter for the Socialist revolution, the Commune evokes sympathy wherever the proletariat is suffering and struggling. The picture of its life and death, the character of the workers' Government which seized and held in its hands during more than two months the capital of the world, the spectacle of the heroic struggle of the proletariat and its sufferings on defeat—all this has fired with inspiration millions of workers, roused their hopes and attracted their sympathy to the support of Socialism. The thunder of the Paris canons awoke from deep slumber the most backward strata of the proletariat, and everywhere gave a stimulus and reinforcement to revolutionary-Socialist propaganda. That is why the cause of the Commune is not dead; it lives to this day in each and every one of us.

The cause of the Commune is the cause of social revolution, the cause of complete political and economic emancipation of the toilers, it is the cause of the proletariat throughout the world. It is in this sense that it is immortal.

[1]Rennenkampf and Meller-Zakonelsky were Tsarist generals notorious for their brutalities against the revolutionary movement. The former was responsible for bestial excesses against the Chinese in the march on Pekin in 1900, and was in charge of a punitive expedition against Chita in 1905; the latter began his career by assisting in the suppression of the Polish insurrection of 1863, took charge of various punitive expeditions, and was notorious as a Governor of the Baltic provinces in 1906-1909.

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BOOK REVIEWS

BOUGHTON ON BACH.

Bach. By Rutland Boughton. (Kegan Paul, Trench, & Co. 7/6)

THIS study of Bach is both interesting and stimulating to read, but it is somewhat baffling to review. The reason for this antithesis seems to be in the fact that the book omits certain things that we expect and contains others that we are surprised to find. For instance the biographical element is spasmodic and unconnected : although there is a good deal of interesting material scattered through the book, but such useful landmarks as dates are practically non-existent. Again the proportions are a little puzzling, since the later and more musically important period of his life receives less attention than the earlier.

On the other hand, the table of contents surprises us by its strange religious flavour : three consecutive chapters are headed " The Decline of Christendom," " Christian or Lutheran ? " and " Reserved Religion Realistic Art," while the following one moves reluctantly " From Pity to Prudence," and the contents of these chapters fully bear out their promise of an unconventional approach.

These preliminary comments bring us to the heart of the argument. Mr. Boughton is not writing a purely personal study of Bach, but is trying to relate him to the life of his time, and to show him as the product—or super product —of his age. But just because such a study is both more valuable and more needed it is also more difficult, since it demands not only an intimate knowledge of the individual subject and of his music—that Mr. Boughton can claim—but a full understanding of the social and economic forces underlying the period and of the place occupied by music in the social scheme.

While this book is a great advance on those numerous studies which consider a composer in vacuo, and his music as purely self explanatory and unrelated to anything else except the music of earlier and later composers, yet it is not entirely successful, because the author does not carry out his task scientifically and systematically enough, and also because it suffers from a lack of proportion.

Mr. Boughton's enthusiasm leads him up strange paths, and we follow panting as he flies along, throwing out as he goes crushing condemnations of modern music, modern organs and pianos, aristocratic tyrants, orthodox Romanists and official Lutherans, or produces sweeping racial generalisations which would cause Mr. Belloc to rise in his wrath in defence of the Latin spirit. With many of his views and prejudices we agree or at least sympathise, but sometimes we desire to challenge him to produce his evidence. For instance the statement that " the typical Italians have shown a strange incapacity for noble creative art " needs considerably more qualification than the one he gives that Giotto and Dante were born in districts settled by German tribes, and the attack on the natural melody of Italy is not substantiated. More important, on page 23, he " recalls a fact apt to be forgotten," *viz.*, that " the Christian civilisation of the Middle Ages was mainly a German civilisation," and speaks of German influence as " evident in all noble Christian growth " from Charlemagne to Bach, and of " the common people, and especially the peasantry of Central Europe who maintained the most

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stubborn fight for the communal principles of Christianity at the close of the Middle Ages."

All this and much more in the present volume not only reveal Mr. Boughton as a somewhat indiscriminate germanophile, but seems to postulate a golden age of Christianity, located in Western Europe in the thirteenth century, when it stood not for its historical tenets, but for a belief in the divinity of man; not for the historical Christ, but for the Christ in us. Its followers were both truly communal and truly individual and they expressed themselves by building the Kingdom of Heaven on earth in the shape of Gothic cathedrals—a vision in many ways Chestertonian, except for the Teutonic flavour.

The struggle between his faith in this idealised or bowdlerised form of religion and the antagonism of a later anti-Christian society is regarded as the root of Bach's spiritual conflict. It is

> " the tragedy of an artist whose inmost nature and external material conditions are in irreconcilable opposition—who is forced by circumstances to devote his life to a kind of spiritual service in which he has no faith, and is necessarily false either to that service or to himself."

The author associates Christianity with the common people and identifies Bach with both, and sets over against them the rules, secular and religious, who were destroying this golden age of happy memory and heading for modern capitalism and corruption.

Thus he speaks of " the transition from music as religion to music as art " as exemplified in Bach's career, and of the chorale, which was " the chief musical bond between the musical artist and the masses of the public " as " the Christian song of Christian people in an unchristian age," by which Bach " voiced what was noblest in that age," That the German people used the chorale to express their discontents and " quoted the scriptures for their purpose " is not to be denied, but such facts should not tempt us to adopt such a purely theological interpretation of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries or lead us to overlook the underlying economic causes of the people's social and religious enslavement.

Mr. Boughton is reacting gallantly from the repulsive " pie in the sky " attitude towards religion, but this does not justify him in denying that christianity contains a large other-worldly if not next-worldly element—otherwise it would not be a religion at all.

He is not too happy either in his attempt to make his hero's life fit in with his ideas. Bach, like most geniuses, did not find it too easy to work to order, whether for a musically ignorant duke or a grasping municipality, but he was a hard-headed and practical man, as well as a pious one, with considerably more skill than the average composer in securing a livelihood for himself and his family while giving himself opportunities for creative work. Although the conditions of service undoubtedly irked him at times and must have pricked his artistic conscience, his facility in compromising makes it hard to be entirely convinced by the author's apologia.

We are inclined to think also that too little stress is laid on the effect of insufficient technical resources, the lack of an adequate choir and orchestra for the performance of his work and the comparative lack of appreciation of his genius.

There is, however, much in this book that lovers of Bach's music will value —his close and loving study of the two Passions, the Cantatas, and above all

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his appreciation of the chorale as the natural musical outlet of the people and the basis of all that was best in the music of Bach, while his glowing tribute to the Chorale Cantatas as the finest of all music should convert listeners to at least one item in the Sunday programme of the B.B.C. His notes on gramophone records are also the very best kind of bibliography in these days of the non-playing amateur.

Finally, this book is filled with a real if somewhat indiscriminate passion for the freedom of the masses, of sympathy with the oppressed and hatred of the oppressor, whether feudal or capitalist, prince or prelate, and if only for this alone, he is worth reading.

E.C.R.

THE BROADCASTING BABBLE MACHINE.

B.B.C. Talks. Published by the British Broadcasting Corporation, 2 Savoy Hill, W.C.

WHEN a newspaper announces that it is " impartial " or " non-political " we know, of course, that in addition to lies we shall get hypocrisy. The B.B.C.—a sort of concentrated vocal edition of the whole bourgeois press—is both non-political and impartial.

Twelve months ago when the " religious persecutions " campaign was at its height, the B.B.C., with mighty flourish of impartial trumpets, refused to broadcast anti-Soviet sermons. There followed a pretty play of attacking the B.B.C. in the capitalist Press: the B.B.C. emerged from the fight a model of non-political impartiality. When all the excitement had died down broadcast sermons freely sprinkled with anti-Soviet propaganda averaged one every six weeks or so.

A talk on the Five-Year Plan disdains crude, *Morning Post* methods, but by the skilful introduction of numerous " ifs " and " buts " and the faint praise that damns, succeeds in presenting the desired picture of disastrous failure which at the same time maintaining the pretence of impartiality. (In this instance, however, lest despite precautions anyone should have dimly sensed the wonderful enthusiasm of the Russian workers—an antidote was speedily administered in the shape of Mr. Gillie Potter. Under the guise of comedy, listeners were given half-an-hour's childish abuse of the Soviet Union.)

A loud blast on the impartial trumpet heralds a talk on Russia, in which D. Bogomoloff of the Soviet Embassy is to figure in a discussion with a Conservative M.P. Interest runs high. But it turns out to be a two to one game in which the M.P. and his chairman take turns in hastily switching conversation to another topic directly they feel they are getting the worst of it (*i.e.*, about every third speech).

" I don't think we can go into that tonight," " I don't think we had better pursue that topic," " In view of M. Bogomoloff's official position we had better not go into that," &c., &c. However, Bogomoloff in his quiet way, got some nasty ones home. A pious little prayer by the chairman for armed intervention as speedily as possible terminated this talk.

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Concurrently with such studies in impartiality there drifts along the corridors of Savoy Hill a dreary succession of scientists, political economists, philosophers and professors, pouring one long, bewildering, contradictory babble into the microphone. Each saying something different, yet all bearing a certain monotonous similarity, for each and all seek to do the same thing—talk sense, yet evade the truth!

For these "great men" professors and politicians, scientists and political economists, are members of the bourgeoisie first, and must square the circle, must make facts fit the theory; must, somehow, support a tottering, played-out social system yet still retain their right to the name of thinkers. What wonder that their talks teem with the wooliest generalisations, with showers of empty words, with downright perversion of facts?

Expert flatly contradicts expert.

Would you know how to help your masters in the great crisis? The great economists will tell you.

"Spend," says J. M. Keynes. "Every 5s. you save puts a man out of work."

"Save," cries Sir J. Stamp. "The nation needs the strictest economy."

Really, these people should take a lesson from the police witnesses.

Sir E. Hilton Young varies his anti-Soviet activities by giving a series of talks on "The Nation's Housekeeping." Finance, he explains, is all so simple, just like running your house. "How much should go out in rent? How much to the baker? Can we afford new blinds?" The talks are given in a pretty-pretty, "make-it-easy-for-the-little-ones" style and its all very clever. The analogy would be good enough, too, were it not that in this most curious household the upstairs people live entirely upon the labours of the downstairs people. What Sir Hilton is talking about is, primarily, the division of the loot by the upstairs people.

M. Dorothy George in a talk on "The Good Old Days," shows how we have progressed. One of the things of the past which she finds "too funny, if it hadn't been so wicked," is the Luddite movement (18th century machine breakers) and we are bid smile pityingly at these poor, ignorant folk wishing to stay the March of Progress. Miss George says good-night, there is a little dance music, and lo! comes a professor crying that we produce too much and too well and that "restriction of output" is necessary. "It may be," says he, "that the world is perfecting its means of production too rapidly."

Oh! M. Dorothy George! surely here in the respectable person of C. Delisle Burns, D. Litt., Professor at Glasgow University, is a Luddite come to life! What is this talk of "restricting output," or "perfecting our means of production too rapidly," but a desire to stay the March of Progress? Ludditry—with a difference. The 18th century machine breaker poor, ignorant and unarmed, saw his very existence as an individual threatened and such miserable crust as he had torn from him: to-day the wealthy, "cultured," and armed bourgeoisie are prepared to use any brutal method to hold back progress, not in fear of starvation, but in order to retain at all costs their position as a purisitic class living on the labour of the workers . . . .

If you don't like economists hear a B.B.C. philosopher. Arnold J. Toynbee is Professor of Research History at London University. He gave six talks

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on " World Order or Downfall." His first talk was to the effect that while he could see no earthly reason why wars should not continue until humanity was wiped out, he hoped they wouldn't. He opened his second talk by naively bidding us " imagine war abolished."

Having got war out of the way he proceeded to describe the new world order, " The Great Society," as he calls it. The economic life of the world will be " unified on a western plan." States will still war but with words instead of weapons.

> " The great new powers of the future like the great powers of the past will strive with each other for mastery with books, newspapers and broadcasting installations of world-wide range."

All will be there living together in a happy, peaceable little family. The millions of workers obediently slaving and starving, their cultured masters, revolted by the brutality of war " striving with each other with words " to decide which particular section shall be exploiter-in-chief.

Well, given half-a-dozen miracles, successful intervention in Russia and the castration of the entire working class, Professor Toynbee's " Great Society " might appear, but would, even so, for obvious reasons lack permanancy.

Professor A. Heath, in six talks, " Thinking Ahead," tells us that the only hope he sees for mankind lies in the " untrammelled use of reflection, in the firm conviction that better thinking will solve the problems which previous thinking has bequeathed us." He can't think beyond the capitalist system, however, and, although he is such a terrifically deep chap that it is a bit difficult to follow him, one gathers that he inclines to a system of love and exploitation on the lines of Toynbee's " Great Society."

" On a level plain," wrote Marx, " mere mounds look like hills. We can measure the imbecile flatness of the modern bourgeoisie by the altitudes its great intellects can reach."

. . . . . .

Always topical, the B.B.C. keeps you right up-to-date. Is there a strike on ? The B.B.C. will tear the biggest expert in that particular industry away from his dinner with the biggest owners in that particular industry, solely in order that " listeners may be kept well informed." Later they shall hear the need for industrial peace from a Cramp or a Hodges or a Citrine. And there will be talks on " Workers' Welfare Centres " by Miss Varley or (if she can possibly spare the time) by Miss Wilkinson herself. These talks, of course, bear no relation to the strike, oh no, they just show you how much is being done for the workers nowadays.

. . . . . .

To sum up. There is about the B.B.C. a clever cunning hypocrisy. A careful study of their methods makes it abundantly clear that, despite all the apparently empty talk broadcast, the B.B.C. not only know their place in the class struggle, but are doing their work more efficiently, more exactly consonant with the times and the political situation than any other propaganda machine that the British ruling class possess. And they always rise to the occasion—remember the General Strike.

B. W.

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PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

Sin and Sex. By Robert Briffault. (G. Allen & Unwin Ltd.) 228 pp. 7s. 6d.

Through the Caucasus to the Volga. By F. Nansen. (G. Allen & Unwin Ltd.) 352 pp. 12s. 6d.

Equality. By R. H. Tawney. (G. Allen & Unwin Ltd.) 300 pp. 7s. 6d.

Why the Land Dies. By Sir Wm. Beach Thomas. (Faber & Faber.) 1s. net. 32 pp.

Britain's Economic Illness. By Henry Somerville. (Harding & Moore Ltd.) 3s. 6d.

The Suffragette Movement. By Sylvia Pankhurst. (Longmans, Green & Co.) 21s. 630 pp. Illustrated.

The Passing of Free Trade. By R. G. Glenday. (Federation of British Industries.) 1s.

The History of T.U. Organisation in the North Staffordshire Potteries. By W. H. Warburton. (G. Allen & Unwin Ltd.) 285 pp. 10s. 6d. net.

City of Birmingham Handbook (*Birmingham U.D.C.*). 150 pp. Available free.

Numbering the People. The Census. (Pamphlet 3d.); and *Science in Making*. (Pamphlet 3d.) British Broadcasting Corporation.

Star Bulletin. Talks etc. By Krishnamurti. (The Star Publishing Agency.) 6d. 40 pp.

A History of Socialism. By S. F. Markham. (A. & C. Black Ltd.) 328 pp. 7s. 6d. net.

The Apple-Cart: A Political Extravaganza. By Bernard Shaw. (Constable & Co. Ltd.) 78 pp. 5s.

Criterion Miscellany:

No. 25. *Persian Painting*. By Mulk Raj. Anand. (Faber & Faber.) 46 pp. 1s.

The People's Year Book. (Co-operative Wholesale Society Ltd.) 360 pp. 2s. paper; 3s. cloth.

B.B.C. Pamphlets: *Thinking Ahead* (Prof. Heath); *The Nation's Housekeeping* (Sir E. Hilton Young), &c. (2d. and 3d. each.)

The Nature of Living Matter. By Lancelot Hogben. (Kegan, Paul.) 316 pp. 15s.

The School Idea: Ancient and Modern. By Valentine Davis. (G. Allen & Unwin Ltd.) 175 pp. 6s.

The Modern Quarterly. Vol. 5, No. 4. (V. F. Calverton, Baltimore, U.S.A.) 50c.

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